The tale of one Swanage lad

Introduction

This is a personal account of my life and career which may be of interest to others. For this reason I have deliberately avoided including extensive details of family relationships, friends, enemies and lovers unless the narrative warrants it.

This of course does not diminish in any way the many people I have played with, worked with or just known over the years. They remain an essential part of my life and memories.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 (Swanage). 4
Chapter 3 - A culture shock. 12
Chapter 4 – I rejoin my country cousins 15
Chapter 5 – My first job 16
Chapter 6 – I start at Winfrith. 22
Chapter 7 – Back to Britain 35
Chapter 8 – Back to sunny Queensland! 36
Chapter 9 – The UK – again and Wareham. 42
Chapter 10 –I become a Civil Servant again. 53
Chapter 11 – A big move. 57
Chapter 12 – A very sad event. 66
References, Bibliography and family trees 67

Chapter 1 (Swanage).

I was born on June 24th, 1943 at 162 Kings Road, Swanage. The birth took place in the house as was the usual practice of the time. I thankfully retain no memory of the occasion but suspect the information to be correct, as my mother who was present at the time, later told me.
In any event, my first early memories would tend to confirm the fact, since I can recall flashes of early childhood from the age of 2-3 years, of the house and garden, which at the time seemed to be very large indeed.

162 Kings road is in fact a modest semi-detached residence of moderate quality dating from the inter-war period which my grandmother often referred to as "Jerry built". At the front was a small garden with an interesting telegraph pole just outside the wall. To the rear was a fair sized garden which sloped gently towards the railway line of the Swanage Branch. In fact the garden extended past the railway fence and on to the embankment itself – this being due to the fact that my Grandfather, then Chief Booking Clerk at Swanage station was entitled to use the embankment for gardening, as a railway employee.

Myself at Swanage with "Connie"

Just across the lines lay the King George's playing fields. Beyond that could be glimpsed the rather more substantial houses of Victoria Avenue whilst in the far distance one could see the range of hills known as Nine Barrow Down. Now I have often walked upon Nine Barrow Down and can certainly confirm the presence of barrows, however due to a lack of inquisitiveness on the issue, have never counted them.

As will be noted from the first sentence, I was born in the middle of World War 2. My father and mother having met whilst serving in the R.A.F. Sadly I have no recollection of my father Flight Sgt. Fredrick Arthur Hayward, as he was shot down and killed shortly after I was born, whilst on a bombing raid on some French railway installations. He was a wireless operator and part of a Lancaster crew. Around 1995 I applied to the RAF for his service record and they supplied me with a good deal of information. Over the years, I have compiled an enormous family tree with a great deal of input from various branches of the family. Sadly though, my research into my father's family history have drawn a blank, going back only as far as his parents – even with the help of the many tools now available on the internet, my research on this has not progressed.

The grave of the Lancaster crew including my father, maintained in pristine condition (Gambais, France).

Although Swanage certainly did not escape the attentions of the Luftwaffe (Hitler having carried out some useful widening in the High street amongst other things), my only recollections of things war-like were the air raid shelter and the blackout curtains. The latter stick in my mind as they were made of rather flimsy black paper which due to copious use, had become holed. These holes had been rectified by the expedient of attaching various pieces of sticking plaster and I do recall getting in to hot water for carefully removing the plasters. I did however grow up thinking that bombed and ruined buildings were quite normal and extremely interesting places.

As I grew old enough I would be taken out for walks across the nearby fields. My favourite being along Kings Road, to the junction of Victoria Avenue. A lady who lived in a corner house kept birds in an aviary attached to her house and this always required a stop. The greatest highlight though was the gasworks. The Swanage gasworks were located just off Victoria Avenue and close to the railway. The site had started in Victorian times with a single retort and other plant, adjacent to the avenue. In later years to meet further demand, additional and by the standards of the day, more modern plant, extended the site on the other side of the public footpath. The result of this was that to reach the fields one walked through the middle of the gasworks.

Few people today will have seen a gasworks of any sort, since they vanished with the advent of natural gas which is pumped from reservoirs in the deep ground, but in the 1940's all British gas was produced by heating coal to red heat which caused the gas to be driven off and left the by-product coke and various other chemicals. Now in a modern factory, processes such as this would be contained in sealed factory units to minimise risk and pollution but at the time no such restrictions were in force and as a result one walked close by active and red-hot retorts with much activity and an unforgettable smell which to me, was better than any perfume! I could have spent all day watching the workings of this plant but eventually my mother would loose patience and we would continue the walk to the fields beyond.

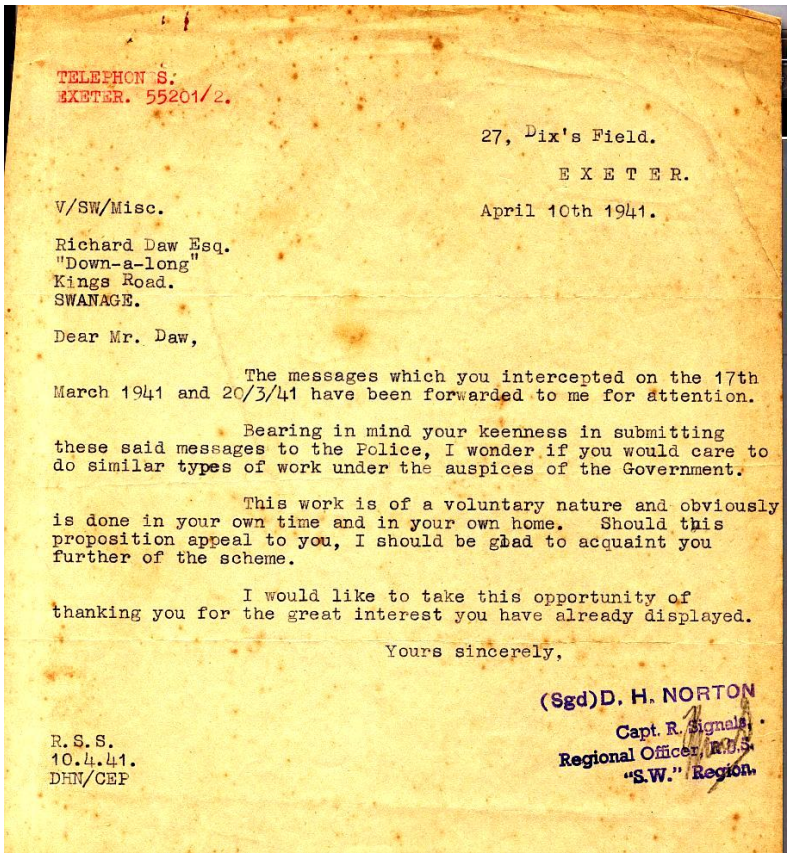
So there we lived. Myself, mother, her mother and father and my great-grandmother, one Spaniel dog and two cats. Sometimes relatives would stay and I recall my curiosity when I espied a cousin apparently putting lard on his head. My mother corrected this by pointing out that the material was in fact, Brylcreem.

Now I mentioned earlier that my grandfather was a railway employee and as such was exempt from National service. This did not stop him from enlisting in the Home Guard. He had spent his entire working life as a railwayman and as a result was trained very well to interpret and send Morse code using the telegraph. As a result of this skill and being an enthusiastic 'short wave listener', he intercepted some rather suspicious Morse messages one evening and being war time, he reported this to the police. He was a little taken aback to later receive a letter thanking him for the information and enquiring as to whether he would be prepared to do further monitoring under Government auspices!

The upshot of this was that he was supplied with a Hallicrafters receiver (somewhat more sensitive than his own broadcast set) and various report pads and documents. Listening then became an unpaid but official evening activity. He became in fact what was known as a 'voluntary interceptor' (VI) and we now know that the material which he and many other radio amateurs collected, was passed to Bletchley Park for decryption. Throughout his life he never knew this, although clearly someone somewhere was making sense of the scrambled code.
Andrew Wright in his book about the Swanage Railway, also claims that he used to listen in during quiet periods at the station while on duty, however, given that the office radio was a rather insensitive and early receiver and also limited to the medium and long wave bands, I think that this claim is unjustified.

From time to time he would receive pamphlets labelled "MOST SECRET" which would indicate which type of signals on which frequency were being sought. He should have burned all documents at cessation of war and I recall him having a big bonfire around 1954, but thankfully he retained a few – now valuable historic documents.

The Hallicrafters receiver (Sky Champion) which he had to reluctantly return at the cessation of hostilities also served to provide good broadcast reception for the ladies of the house during the day.



TELEPHONES.
EXETER. 55201/2.

27, Dix's Field.

EXETER.

V/SW/Misc.

April 10th 1941.

Richard Daw Esq.
"Down-a-long"
Kings Road.
SWANAGE.

Dear Mr. Daw,

The messages which you intercepted on the 17th March 1941 and 20/3/41 have been forwarded to me for attention.

Bearing in mind your keenness in submitting these said messages to the Police, I wonder if you would care to do similar types of work under the auspices of the Government.

This work is of a voluntary nature and obviously is done in your own time and in your own home. Should this proposition appeal to you, I should be glad to acquaint you further of the scheme.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for the great interest you have already displayed.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd)D. H. NORTON
Capt. R. Signals.
Regional Officer, R.D.F.
"S.W." Region.

R.S.S.
10.4.41.
DHN/CEP

MOST SECRET

TO: ALL V.Is.
FROM: CONTROLLER, R.S.S.

All V.Is. are reminded that their work is in many instances directly connected with the safety of our troops fighting in France and on other fronts. We feel sure we can rely upon you all not to relax your efforts in the slightest degree until we give the word that you can safely do so without prejudice to the troops at the front.

8th September, 1944

E. F. Maltby,
Lt. Colonel, R. Signals
Controller, R.S.S.

Chapter 2 - Off to Corfe Castle

Being the child of a railway family, it is not surprising that I was introduced to all the aspects of railway working from a very young age. My earliest memories being of Swanage station – the parcel office having an unusual but not unpleasant smell, the platforms and the busy booking office, all brilliantly lit by gas mantles.
My grandfather kept an old Mullard radio in the booking office. A piece of very early radio engineering, it was considered old even in the 40's. It used an accumulator for the low-tension supply, a nine-volt grid bias battery and a 120 volt high-tension battery. I was allowed to play with this with a little care, and had to be wary of the on/off switch which carried the HT supply, and touching the metalwork of the switch could result in a nasty tingle.

Gradually I found myself taking trips on the train – often in the guards van or brake van and loved to see the guard operate the vacuum brake with the accompanying hiss. My travels at this time took me as far as Waterloo station where I can recall seeing an almost unlimited number of people. This was a bit different from country living!

On my first long trip we passed through Corfe Castle and I saw the castle for the fist time. I of course wanted to visit the castle then and there, but my mother assured me that I would have plenty of opportunity in the near future, as Grandfather had been promoted to Station Master and we would all be shortly moving to live in the house at Corfe Castle station. Apart from the castle, a little further up the line we would pass Holton Heath station – the home of the Royal Naval Cordite Factory.[1] A most wondrous place full of odd looking buildings and machines. I asked my mother what it was all about. She replied "That's Holton Heath. Explosives. Very hush-hush." Could we go and see it? Not a chance. More on this remarkable place later.

On another occasion, my grandfather took me on an unusual train trip. This was up to Portland via the Portland railway, leaving from Weymouth station. It was an interesting trip. I recall the little steam engine working hard to get up the incline. We arrived at the top of Portland on a foggy day. There was absolutely no one to be seen. We walked to the nearest pub where we had intended to get a sandwich. The pub was open but empty. After ringing the bell and waiting ten minutes, we gave up and took the train back. The place was like the Marie Celeste. I was always grateful for that trip, as few passengers ever used the line and it was closed to passenger traffic shortly after, remaining open for freight for a few more years. I have never yet encountered anyone else who can claim to have been to Portland by train.

Over the years I grew to love Portland – not just because of the countryside and the sea, but because up until more recent times it was a place of mystery, having a myriad of both disused and working quarries, forts, a prison and Borstal and best of all, the huge Naval dockyard – famous for secret work on submarine detection systems and the well known 'Portland Spy case' involving Harry Houghton and Ethyl Gee.
Portland on a hot summer's day is a paradise. In winter it can be windswept and desolate – not unlike Anglesey. I have a clear recollection when being a member of the 'Zimbalist' band (*see later)* we were contracted to play a 'gig' at the officer's social club in the Verne prison. This turned out to be on a dark winters evening with pouring rain and the sense of gloom was heightened dramatically when accessing the prison by the huge grey stone portal which in the circumstances could only have been matched by an inscription saying "Abandon hope all ye who enter here"! Once inside the warm club an excellent evening ensued. I would have gladly retired to live on Portland – the property was not too expensive, but the down side is the fact that in the busy summer, one is landlocked by the Weymouth traffic jams, almost as effectively as if one were surrounded by the sea.

But I digress. Whatever comments that my grandmother might have made about Corfe Castle station house, the one thing she could not have accused it of, was being 'jerry built'. Corfe station was and is a model of excellent Victorian building and most substantial. Some modern improvements had been added prior to us moving in. The water now came from the main

supply instead of a well, and the luxury of a bath was installed in the kitchen along with an electric water heater. Cooking still had to be done on a Victorian range however, and an original 'copper' was still present in which to boil washing.

At this time I was about 7 years old and as can be imagined, a small but quite comprehensive country railway station was the ideal place to play around, if not necessarily the safest. The station boasted a fair sized goods shed, cattle yards and sidings. All of these were put to good use in the fifties, as most deliveries including livestock were made by train. Just about every type of farm animal would pass through the station from time to time and some interesting wagons would remain in the yard for exploration. The one I particularly liked was a wagon designed for transporting horses. This had stalls in the main body and a marvellous little living area for the groom in which he could relax and even sleep in the bunk bed provided. There was also a stationary camping coach in the yard which folk could hire as holiday accommodation. Sometimes some kids would be included, which gave me a few more friends to play with – not that I was short of friends, as I had just started attending the Corfe Castle Primary school (later to become the British Legion club) and did not take long to get to know all the Corfe kids and those from surrounding villages. I later became old enough to join the 'big' school as it was known, on the other side of the main road. The classrooms of this school were warmed in winter by large coke stoves, which were surprisingly efficient. One year our class teacher (Mrs. Dodd) cooked us an excellent Christmas lunch on the stove – bringing it to red heat in the process! It was in this school that I became good friends with one Jimmy Underdown, who reappears later in this narrative.

When there was not enough mischief to be sought around the station, there was always the castle. One could easily get into trouble on the station and sometimes my curiosity got me into very deep water – the main occasion being when I fitted some explosive fog detonators on the main line, thus holding up a holiday express.

Just across the railway line which then could be crossed on foot, was another fascinating establishment – the milk factory. This to give it the official title was a creamery associated with Wilts. United Dairies. Now I for a long time believed that this was a factory owned by someone called "Wilt", but it transpired that this was in fact, short for Wiltshire.
This place could keep me occupied for ages, and it is typical of the good will of the staff and the delightful lack of oppressive health and safety regulations, that I was able to roam at will at any time, on any part of the plant.

On crossing the line and turning to the right, one first passed the refrigeration plant. This was full of noisy ammonia compressors used for cooling the milk. Although I found the machines most interesting, the continual noise and heavy atmosphere of ammonia vapour meant that one did not linger there for too long.

Moving a little further on, was the boiler house where I often spent an afternoon with whoever was feeding the boilers. There was a piston driven steam operated pump for boiler feed water and a most ingenious steam valve which blew the boiler ash through an underground pipe, to the waste heap, some 50 feet away. I did not like to miss this particular operation as the result was a spectacular volcano of ash spurting up in the distance.
From my bedroom I could see the boilers being lit on a dark morning, as flames would shoot out of the chimneys. This house supplied pressurised steam to the rest of the factory, the most dramatic use being the sterilisation of emptied churns in a carousel, which caused an enormous cloud of steam to be blown out from the exhaust.

The plant even included a little testing laboratory where the quality of the product was monitored. I recall some difficulty in differentiating between the words "laboratory" and "lavatory", but was well aware of the different functions!

The station at Corfe Castle (1951).

As I said – if the interest in the railway yard waned, there was always the castle. Now owned by the National Trust, there are quite a few bits where you can not walk, let alone climb, but in the 1950's and prior to some patchy work done by the Ministry of Works, nothing was off limits which gave rise to some great climbing experiences. One which I was always a bit too scared to attempt was the route to the top set of windows in the keep, although not much else was out of my reach. Curiously and thankfully although the castle was one huge climbing frame and adventure centre for the village kids, I can not recall any injuries worse than the odd bruise or scrape – the exception being a visitor who managed to fall from one of the towers and broke a leg. It was almost as if the castle looked after us kids.

After some years at the station, my mother decided that she wanted a place of her own. I was never sure if that was due to my being a bit of a handful while she was out working at Holland's shop in the square, or she just wanted some independence. In either case, there was never any question of family break up, just that mother & I moved to a small cottage in East Street. It was number 132, but the numbering system was later changed and our cottage merged with the property next door.

Our new abode could be best described as quaint. It was a very old property, probably as old as the castle itself. There was one moderate room downstairs with a scullery at the back with a cold tap and a sink. There was a Victorian range in the living room which did warm the place quite well once lit. The coal for this was kept under the stairs. There were two bedrooms aloft, and one bedroom floor had a drop of about eight inches towards the corner. There was no lavatory or bathroom, unless you include the outside privy which was accessed through the front door, down the street, along an alley, through a back yard and finally in the area of the communal gardens. We considered ourselves most fortunate when later the Council installed public toilets up near the Bankes Arms hotel – at least it was a shorter walk! All this might sound a bit grim, but it was not, and we enjoyed living there. Many houses in Corfe at the time worked on a similar system. A little later, the mains gas supply was introduced to the village and we had the luxury of a gas cooker. No need to wait for the range to heat up.

Altogether, my first years at Corfe were very happy ones and my early life in the country was to set me into being a dedicated country boy. I could never live in a city, no matter how high the wage. We were not exactly flush with money, as my mother worked as a shop assistant, but somehow paid the bills. One advantage of her employment was that her employer Eddie Holland and his wife Edna, two of the kindest and most helpful folk I have known, allowed us

to treat their home as ours to a large degree. The fact that the shop sold sweets was also seen by me to be a considerable boon until that is, I had to have quite a few milk teeth removed due to serious decay. Eddie Holland had started business in the square at Corfe in a small room which was little more than a cupboard, selling mainly tobacco and newspapers. He was an excellent businessman and later took over the two largest shops in the square, selling sweets, toys and wool as well as the newspapers and tobacco. He lived over the shop which at the time of writing is Dragon's Bakery – and an interesting rabbit warren of rooms. My mother also did some work for Brian Ottaway who ran a radio repair business on the opposite side of the square. That was an odd setup, since the upstairs room doubled as both an office and on a part time basis, also accommodated a visiting dentist, with the result that a dentist's chair stood near the window.
Across the main road was Cleale's Stores (grocers) and I knew the inside of this establishment as well, since the proprietors Mr & Mrs. Moss were very friendly to the family. This store was a very old building and I recall Mr. Moss taking me down a dark passage and showing me a cellar (still complete with wooden trunks) where meat was once stored before the benefit of refrigeration (or electricity) was available. Sadly in later years the entrance to the cellar was walled off. I can not imagine why. In a similar spoilsport move the various village pumps were de-activated. I well recall getting a delicious cool drink from the one outside the primary school.

By this time, I had developed a strong interest in things electrical probably due to the influence of my grandfather and I was always rigging up bells and telephones and playing with radios. I had impressed an aunt in London by repairing the bell system in a block of flats at the age of seven. I guess that I was destined to take up a career in electronics, but up until the age of 10 or so, I was still unsure as to what I wanted to do. I seriously considered farming at one point, but later discarded the idea due to the fact that it was increasingly rare to find horses used on the land.

The family at Corfe station.
L to R: Mother, Grandmother, Aunt Maisie and Grandfather With Cousin Richard on his knee.

Chapter 3 - A culture shock.

My mother was I believe, always conscious of the fact that I was fatherless and had a tendency to be a bit on the wild side. Because of this and to grasp the opportunity of a better education for me, she arranged that I should attend the Royal Wanstead School at Snaresbrook in Essex. This school was based upon the public school model, but did not require scholarship entry or in my case fees, as the organisation was a charity particularly for children who were missing one parent or another. This accounted for quite a few children after the war. I was to meet a chap in Queensland many years later, who claimed that as a member of the local Masonic Lodge at the time, he had contributed to my education!

Needless to say, I was not at all keen to leave home for an unknown boarding school at the age of nine and a bit, but I could see that the die had been cast and that it had to be accepted. My first visit was encouraged by a promise to stop off in London for a visit to the science museum. I was horrified that the school might be in some city area and was somewhat relieved to find that Snaresbrook was quite a pleasant little town not too far from Epping Forest, although countryside it was not. The school buildings were vast wings of Victorian style – a most attractive set, but somewhat overwhelming to a small boy.

Lord, behold us with thy blessing….

A couple of the senior lads with family at RWS.

On the first day I met various members of staff and some of the boys and eventually we were shown up to our dormitory. Our house was 'North' our house master was a nice chap called Mr. Fulcher and the dormitory in parallel with 'East' house sat astride the chapel. The chapel incidentally, was equipped with quite a good organ and frequently of an evening the dormitory floor would shake when someone was practising 'Toccata & Fugue'!

I did not sleep much that night and was miserable for the whole of the first term. I hated being restricted to the school grounds, being made to play football, being herded in with a lot of strange chaps – some of whom later turned out to be good friends, some enemies, and some just totally uninteresting. One boy whom I met on the first day and who like me was a confused newcomer, was a chap called Barry Moore. We later became good friends but did not keep in touch over the years until meeting once again at a reunion some fifty years on!

To be fair, the school did a good job, considering the post-war standards of the day. We were kept healthy, allowed to climb the trees in the grounds and the staff of the Junior school were a pretty good bunch.

Around 1954 I had to make the move over to the Senior school, which was in fact part of the same vast range of buildings. Although I could never say that I had enjoyed my stay at this school, by this time I was at least accustomed to the place and knew what was expected. I had also become an early and seasoned commuter, now making the journey at end of term back to Corfe by myself and lugging a heavy suitcase.
So on to the seniors. This was a somewhat different regime from the juniors with slightly different rules. On the one hand we had the advantage of being much freer to visit the town during time off and if time allowed, take train trips. The down side was that we were theoretically not supposed to climb trees, although this rule was not strictly observed. The academic studies became rather more onerous and included evening work as well as day classes. These evening sessions were supervised by prefects who were permitted to use a degree of corporal punishment, the favourite being a ruler applied to the knuckles. The prefects were large chaps who ruled supreme. This did not prevent a response from a cheeky lad from Nottingham, who when the prefect roared at him "Stop that you – I don't like it" replied, "Well Courtenay, you'll have to do the only other alternative." "And what is that?" came the roar. "Lump it!" came the reply.
I can not recall the result of this incident, since the whole class was helpless with laughter for at least ten minutes.
The school had some very interesting features which I shall describe. To begin with, on the side fronted by the senior wing were large playing fields which led down to quite a large lake, known as Eagle Pond. This lake overflowed to a stream through a wood to one side known as the Dell. Now the Dell was rarely frequented by either staff or teachers and was in theory out of bounds, although this rule was rarely enforced. As a result, if one wished to conduct any nefarious activity such as smoking or bunking off, the Dell was at least in summer, the place to be.
The stream from the lake having passed through the wood disappeared underground through a large drain. Needless to say we explored this one afternoon, to find ourselves after much cramped walking in a maze of sewer tunnels. This was my first but certainly not last underground exploration.
The lake, although not suitable for swimming was very handy for poking around in and I recall an occasion when we managed to float a large log, capable of supporting two boys. We had great fun paddling this around until on one occasion a foolish lad got stranded in the middle of the lake with no paddle. I seem to recall that he was there for the whole day.

Beneath the buildings ran large cellars which needless to say, we explored from time to time. We discovered a little hidden room equipped with a table and some benches plus a few cups on the shelf. This had clearly been employed for some drinking parties in the past. The whole school was heated by two large coal-fired boilers which were located in part of the cellars. An easy access to the cellars was to simply walk down the wide ramp through which the coal was delivered.

To one side of the lake was a good rifle-range and I should add at this stage that the senior school ran an Army cadet force of which membership was compulsory including all the usual Blanco, boot polishing and stamping up and down and shouting. I firmly believe that this cadet training was sufficient to persuade at least 100 boys that the Army was not the career for them! Fortunately for me, National Service ended just before I became of age.

Not being particularly keen on all the parade stuff, I maintained a de-minimis approach to the subject, which was fine except that it did not allow me to progress to the signals section which rather precluded my desire to mess around with the various radio sets which they had.

The school had no swimming pool. There was one before the war, but it had been closed and filled in and latterly housed the woodwork and metalwork workshops. Swimming had to be undertaken at the Whipps Cross Lido, which was a fairly short walk from the school through the woods. This was a fine affair of the type which was popular in the thirties and like so many has now sadly been demolished. Swimming was a sport that I actually enjoyed and even volunteered to rise early on a summer's morning to accompany the group for a pre-breakfast swim.

I should also note one other difference between the juniors and seniors. The juniors were co-educational, but there was a sad lack of the opposite sex in the seniors. A pity, since I was starting to find girls rather interesting. Some of the older seniors would strike up liaisons with the maids who were employed in the kitchens.
One benefit of the seniors was that we were allowed to lash up radio equipment in the dormitories. Generally this was of course crystal sets, but I did at one stage operate a two-valve radio.

The masters were a bit of a mixed lot, varying from pleasant types with a good deal of talent, through to some rather poor types. A few of these were sadistic, and a couple where what we now know as paedophiles. One of these twisted types eventually committed suicide by jumping from the fire escape. They never gave me any trouble, possibly because from my reactions they could see that I was to be avoided. We never thought of complaining, it probably would have done no good if we had.

On the occasion of getting the usual measles/mumps/chicken pox etc. We would be confined to the school sanatorium, presided over by two nurses and a sister. Nobody minded a trip to the 'San' as life there was luxury compared to school, and the sister and nurses were all jolly good characters.

The school at the time of writing, now houses the Snaresbrook Crown Court and whilst preserving the exterior, the inside has been extensively modified for the new use.
Was it good for me? I often wonder how life might have been different had I simply attended

the state schools in Dorset. Well I suppose it was an experience which introduced me to a wide range of people whom I would otherwise not have been aware of. It certainly gave me a reasonable education however, just as I was becoming adept at playing the system, things changed. My mother confessed that as fees would be due in the future, she would have difficulty in paying for me to stay on. Would I mind spending the last year or two in the Dorset school system? I did not mind at all, so it was farewell to Wanstead. The fees incidentally were due to the fact that my mother had met and married Vic. Portt, a nice chap from Corfe Castle whom I knew well from earlier years, so no problem there. I later gained two half sisters, Judy and Lindy.
Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing…. *Platform 14 at Waterloo for the Swanage branch*.

Chapter 4 – I rejoin my country cousins

I was enrolled at Wareham Secondary Modern School for the last year or two of secondary education. At that time (late fifties), the biggest employer in Purbeck was still the farming industry. As a consequence the school was well geared up with its own farm and gardens, to give courses on agriculture, gardening and bee-keeping. There were two streams of education 'P' for practical and 'G' for what, good? I never found out. Anyway, although I excelled at science and English, the other requirement to get into the G stream was mathematics, in which at the time, I was rather weak. The result being that I got placed in the practical classes, something for which I have been eternally grateful ever since.
It is an odd fact that many of us in the P stream went on to be engineers, writers even whilst quite a few of the G types went on to become bus drivers or postmen.

I really enjoyed my brief time at Wareham. To start with it included girls – creatures which I was finding more and more interesting. I could go home at nights. The country kids were much more sociable and easy going than my fellows at Wanstead. Not really surprising since they all came from rural Purbeck, whereas the types at Wanstead were a very mixed lot from a wide range of backgrounds and locations.
I found that my academic background at Wanstead had stood me in good stead, as I could easily reach the top in many subjects – particularly my favourite, science. I was very interested in chemistry at the time and gained a reputation for the manufacture and supply of 'stink bombs' (Hydrogen sulphide – the 'bad egg' gas). As a result I acquired the nicknames of "professor" and "pongo". I preferred the former.
At one time the headmaster drew me to one side and pointed out that a brand new school had opened in Swanage. Our family had now moved to a new house at Harmans Cross on the retirement of my grandfather, and this put me in the catchment area. I could have the choice of attending Swanage or staying at Wareham, but I would have to bike in, as the school bus would not be available. I unhesitatingly chose to stay at Wareham.
The staff at Wareham were absolutely first class. When we had exhausted the curriculum, the teachers would not leave it at that, but took us forward. To this day I am grateful to our English teacher Miss Mulraine, who found the time to familiarise us with the necessary formats required in business and public life.

The house at Harmans cross was specially built to the requirements of my grandfather and grandmother as a retirement house in a half-acre of garden. My great-grandmother had died while I was away at school. She had been in hospital for some time.
My grandparents immediately got going with their hobby of gardening, but before the beds could be prepared, a rotovator had to be brought it to break up the soil, which was heavy clay and former pasture land. Their peace in retirement must have been tempered somewhat by the fact that Vic and my mother plus myself were later living there as well. We did get on fairly well together, although there were a few tiffs between Vic and my grandmother, who was not in the best of health, and could be a bit fiery at the best of times. She kept for example, my grandfather's 12 bore shotgun close to her chair in the living room which she declared was available to "shoot the Russians" – this was of course in the dark early days of the cold war. We had a television set by then and I clearly recall coming in one afternoon and seeing the Cuban missile crisis unfold. I seriously thought that we might be doomed at that point.
I also well remember an occasion when my grandmother got into some hot water while we lived at Corfe station. The house kitchen had windows which looked out onto the platform and due to the platform canopy, let in little natural light at the best of times. These windows had wide stone sills outside and from time to time if the platform was busy, passengers would sometimes use these as a seat which would lead to grandmother asking them to shift. One person was reluctant to do so – the result being that they were assisted in doing so by the fact that grandmother drenched them with water from the garden syringe! I did not hear

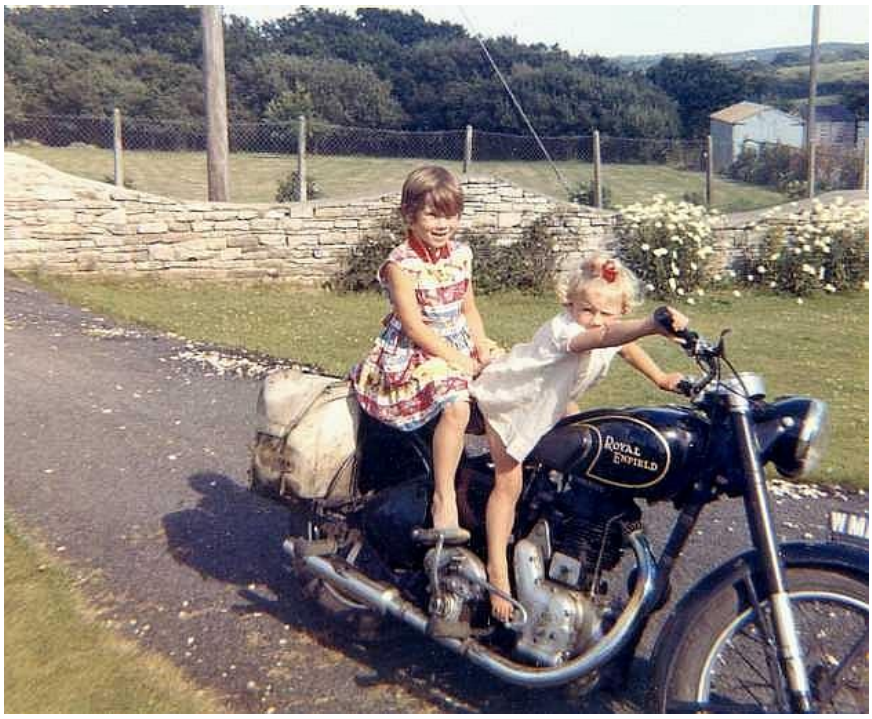
the result, but it was clear that she later received a lecture on passenger relations from my grandfather. Grandmother must have been a bit of a handful in her early years as well. Her father was a builder of church organs and she once told me how she got into trouble for walking across some lead organ pipes which had been stored on the floor. It seems that she enjoyed the sensation of squashing the pipes!

I had of course continued in my fascination with radio and electronics and I was the proud possessor of a very nice ex-naval radio – a B21, a gift from my grandfather, with which I spent hours listening to various stations. I had also received a very nice birthday present – my own shed in the garden, which gradually filled up with all sorts of electrical bits and pieces and I started to build my own stuff. These years were perhaps the heyday for amateur radio. There was an incredible amount of surplus radio kit left over from the war which came on the market at very low prices, thus you could buy a communications receiver for around six pounds, a transmitter for around four pounds and you were spoilt for choice. They needed some ingenuity to connect up or modify to get working, but doing this formed the basis of early self training of a great number of folk who were later to become engineers and scientists.

My memory may be hazy, but I do not think that O and A levels had at the time been invented. I did some evening classes in the final year and emerged from school at the age of fifteen, the proud holder of the Workers Education Certificate in English, Maths and Technical drawing.

It was time to seek employment. Few people then went on to University and those that did were generally from the Grammar school brigade and wealthy families. It was never a consideration or desire in my case, so I needed a job. My mother came in with me to see the Youth Employment Officer at Poole. He was quite a helpful chap who amused us by saying that he had a lad and his mother in recently, stating that the lad wanted to work with aircraft. "No problem" said the officer, "we can probably fit him in at Hurn Airport[2]". "Oh no!" exclaimed the mother, "He has to work in Swanage." Sadly for her, Swanage did not, does not and hopefully never will, possess an airport!

Sisters Judy and Lindy on my bike at Harmans Cross



Chapter 5 – My first job

My first job was conveniently located just down the road from where we now lived, in Harmans Cross. This was as an apprentice to L.O. Sparkes, of "Sparkes Data Sheets". The purpose of the company which had now vastly increased it's workforce from two to three people, was a mail order company producing data sheets and also parts kits to enable the home constructor to build a variety of gadgets, mainly radio receivers. A surprising variety of kits were on offer, from single valve regenerative receivers up to multi-stage mains operated TRF (tuned radio frequency) sets. All the offerings were valve-based, the transistor not yet having taken over, although we were experimenting with transistors in the workshop.

All of the kits were supplied up to 'chassis' level, i.e. we did not supply cabinets. Looking back, some of these sets were potentially lethal, being based upon the 'live chassis' principle where there was no isolating mains transformer and the metal chassis was connected directly to the mains. If the mains plug was incorrectly polarised, this meant that touching any metalwork would result in a serious shock. Such devices would not be permitted on sale these days.

Leslie Ormond Sparkes was an ex-Londoner and one of the old school of the radio industry. He was old enough to have risen through the business during the heyday of radio and consequently knew many of the figures who turned out later to be wealthy industry leaders in the field of electronics. He had reduced his business on semi-retirement to Dorset and now operated the business from a large double wooden shed at the back of his bungalow in Harmans Cross.

Sadly, I was not to be long in this job as illness caught up with Mr. Sparkes and he died quite suddenly, leaving his widow Pauline and yours truly to gradually wind down and close the business. Sadly for me, my grandmother died under similar circumstances around this time. This made quite a difference to our domestic circumstances, as Vic. and my mother had been looking around various properties to be able to move out and leave the grandparents in peace. The death changed all this, as my grandfather was keen for us all to stay put, rather than leave him alone in an empty house.

I was fortunate enough to secure another apprenticeship straight away, with a Mr. L.L. Watmore, who ran a small Radio & TV business in Studland, a delightful little seaside village about five miles away, to which I would cycle each day with an OXO tin on the back of my bike containing lunch. Now while I had already achieved a good knowledge of the workings of radio, television was a bit of an unknown and I was very glad that Mr. Watmore enrolled me in the City & Guilds course at Bournemouth College.

I found the training at college wonderful. Here were some chaps who really knew their stuff, explaining some of the technicalities which until then were missing from my knowledge. At the end of that five-year course, I was to leave with the final City & guilds certificate plus an embarrassingly good reference stating that I had been the best student in the group!

Students will be students and members of our class were no exception. I recall two good pranks. The first consisted of wiring a photographic flash bulb across the heater circuit of a receiver under test. When the prankee returned from break and switched on the set, there was an almighty flash and a gasp of horror from all who were not in the know.

Early employment at Studland.

The second concerned a college open day. It had been decided that one of the exhibits in the hall would be an amateur radio station, operating live. Needless to say we could not resist

coupling a signal generator to an aerial and sweeping the frequency around that which the station was using, whilst monitoring his transmission for comments. It worked. We heard the operator say: "Missed a bit of that old man, there seems to be a commercial operator on frequency. He needs to brush up his Morse a bit!" This of course gave rise to a great guffaw, which our lecturer was later at pains to point out, was not only clearly audible in the hall, but which had also gone out over the air!
The only sad part about Bournemouth College was the fact that there were then no women employed in engineering. There were of course plenty of attractive types in the arts department. Unfortunately for us, they were ensconced on the very top floor, whilst the engineering department occupied the basement!

During this time I had struck up a particularly good friendship with a chap from Corfe Castle whom I had known on and off for some years. His name was Howard Orchard. Both Howard and I shared an interest in radio and also music. He had a particularly good HiFi system and mine was quickly catching up. We would spend long evenings either at his place or mine, listening to music – usually big band stuff.
I had acquired a war surplus aircraft transmitter, type T1154 and Howard had an army tank set, No. 19. Over time we both acquired much more. Needless to say, we were both keen to set up communications and used to have regular conversations over the air on a frequency of about 8 Mc/s. This was of course completely illegal and in the world of licenced amateur radio we would be considered as 'pirates'. Nonetheless, a number of amateurs in the locality knew what we were up to and helped us with a bit of advice – always provided that they never heard us on the amateur bands!
On one occasional Howard went 'mobile'. He kitted out his car with the 19 set and a power supply, listened on a pair of phones and had a ten foot whip aerial on the back of the car. We then proceeded to see how far he could get before the signals dropped out. Well they never dropped out – Howard was beginning to get so many funny looks that he decided to come in. We also used to broadcast music from my base via a tape recorder and then drive around Purbeck seeing just how far the signals were getting. Knowing what I now know about frequency and propagation, I suspect that the reception was probably better in say, Germany than just across the Purbeck hills! We also broadcast Swanage pantomime one year, again, driving up into the hills to listen to it. My girlfriend of the time Jean, was most impressed, saying that she could not understand how the sound was captured in the car, to which Howard replied "Did you not notice that big coil of telephone wire on the back of the car?" It was only as she looked back that she realised she was being 'had.'

Another radio enthusiast and 'pirate' was a friend who lived at Dunshay Manor. He was Nigel Baynes, son of the well-known aircraft designer Leslie E. Baynes. He was also the proud owner of various bits of wireless and one who joined me at various times both on the air and helping to 'liberate' such useful items as coaxial cable and insulators from the mothballed site of RAF Worth Matravers (see below). One time stands out in my mind. We were both looking out from Nigel's bedroom window when he decided to shoot a pistol at something outside, in close proximity to my ear. It took around ten seconds for my hearing to slowly fade back up to a usable level! The extensive garden at Dunshay Manor was a bit of a jungle. I recall one evening stumbling around in the twilight when I bumped into 'someone' and apologised, shortly after realising that the 'someone' was a statue.

Not everyone knows that the peaceful area of Worth Matravers nearby was the place where 10 cm. Radar was pioneered. Since the end of WW2, the site had remained in 'mothballs' and was overgrown and deserted. We would from time to time explore the site, its towers and buildings and sometimes recover some useful items which had been left around, such as insulators or coaxial cable. Sadly in the early sixties, the towers were removed and the site demolished. Now there is only a memorial to the valuable work done on St. Aldhem's head nearby, and the remains of the blast-wall which once protected the CHL[3] radar.

A part of TRE Worth Matravers around 1940

I had long been envious of Howard's mobility in the car, even though it was a bit of an old banger, and I decided that the time had come for me to get a motor bike. Being an impecunious apprentice and not having much cash, I asked Howard if he could find a suitable machine for sale. Well he could and did and I ended up purchasing a Triumph Tiger Cub from a work colleague of his. Price £60.00.

That little bike took me a good few miles with periodic attention kindly provided by Reg Legg's motorcycle garage in Swanage. One of my first trips took me in the direction of Winfrith where I espied with some awe, the mighty Atomic Energy Establishment. I did not realise that later in my career I would work at that site, firstly for the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority, and again many years hence, for the Ministry of Defence!

I passed my motorcycle test at the first go, and was keen to get a larger machine. Reg. Legg had an immaculate BSA 500cc twin 'Shooting Star', which I had always admired. It came as a surprise when he said that he would sell it if I wanted it, at a reasonable price. Well, I certainly wanted it, to the extent of borrowing some cash from my grandfather to get it. What a bike – it would do 110 m.p.h. on a flat road as I proved on the nice long Army road which runs from Holme Lane to Lulworth. This was an excellent road for bike testing, since there was very little traffic and at that time, there were no fences on either side of the road which meant that should one get out of control, one would simply end up on the soft heathland. The imposition of the 70 m.p.h. speed limit had yet to be introduced, but even if it had, it would have been ignored. My last and best bike was a Vellocette Thruxton which would easily do 120 mph with fantastic acceleration.

My five years with Les. Watmore passed quite rapidly and enjoyably. A TV serviceman at the time was quite busy and a faulty TV was considered an emergency, at least by the family concerned. My journeys took me into just about every house in the village of Studland and quite a few beyond. Mr. Watmore decided that I should have some lessons in driving his large ford van. These lessons were not too successful. He was frankly not the best of instructors and I was a bit of a speed king, having got used to a nimble motorcycle. We agreed to halt the experiment on the occasion that I almost gave him a heart attack whilst proceeding rather rapidly down a hill to a 'Z' bend below, where another vehicle was coming in the other direction. L.W. was very relieved when he again opened his eyes, to note that we had not collided with anything. I did later have a few lessons with a professional instructor and later bought an old banger of my own – a Wolsey 680 and passed the test first time, oddly enough via the same examiner. The car was however in the future and in the meantime I used to attend to my TV field duties on the trusty motorcycle. Oddly enough, the end of my apprenticeship provided a rather dramatic event on a motorcycle, this time on a borrowed Ariel, as I think mine was in for service.
I had cycled to Southampton College, for it was there that I was to take the practical tests for the final certificate. These completed satisfactorily, I noted on the return (now in darkness) that the weather had turned very nasty with wind and pouring rain. Not looking forward to

the ride, I set off. Somewhere in the middle of the New Forest a pack of horses decided to cross the road in front of me. I was soon amongst them and the road was a jumble of horses, machine and me. As I came off, the Avometer which was hung on my shoulder went flying off and crashed down in the road. I was very lucky, and so were the horses. The bike had a large fibreglass fairing which had bounced off the horses and saved both them and me from injury. The only damage was a broken glass on the headlamp. The bulb was fortunately intact. Amazingly the Avo was not only intact after the smash; its calibration was still perfect!

As my apprenticeship drew to a close, Mr. Watmore had a quiet word with me, explaining that due to the limited income which his small business brought in, now that I was qualified I would be by regulation due to a much larger wage which he could not afford to pay and regrettably he would have to release me. Now I did not mind this a bit, as given my good results at college, I felt keen to take on something a bit more challenging and had also started on the route to getting the HNC in electronics. It is fair to add that the choice for anyone with even the minimum qualification in electronics or radio at the time was incredible. The world – quite literally was one's oyster as the number of well paid overseas vacancies advertised in "Wireless World" testified. I was not that keen though to go abroad and what took my attention was an advertisement in that same magazine, requesting applications for staff to serve as Instrument Technicians at UKAEA[4], Winfrith. I applied at once.

The administration building at Winfrith.

During the period when we all lived at Harmans Cross, my two sisters were growing up. I was a teenager at the time that they were little girls and at that time with the age difference, there was a big culture gap. My interests took me to the youth club, radio ventures and bands when not at work. This did not stop us having common ground and a lot of fun together. Two games come to mind. One involved me loading the girls into a wheelbarrow and propelling them as fast as possible down the garden path – releasing the barrow at the last moment. The other involved them launching themselves into space from the shed roof; confident that I would catch them. Amazingly, they not only survived but came back for more. In later years after boy friends and later marriage, the age difference seemed to melt away.

Shortly after Anne & I were married (the sisters making ideal bridesmaids), the house at Harmans Cross was sold – the family moving to Wareham, thus enabling Vic to travel to work more easily. Before the Swanage railway was closed he had only to cycle to Corfe to get the train. With no railway, a much longer journey to Wareham would be required.

Chapter 6 – I start at Winfrith.

It is a funny thing, but on a number of occasions when going for an interview in a large establishment I have had that little moment of mental panic and thought can I do this? Why did I not become a gardener? Fortunately that thought only lasts for a split second.

I had to stop at the police lodge and collect a visitor's pass and directions to the building I was to attend for interview at B20, as I recall. Winfrith is a very large site and vehicular transport often required to get from one building to another. The site at this time was in its heyday and very busy with transport moving to and fro and folk walking around wearing white coats. A veritable busy ant heap, compared to the tranquil Dorset heath just beyond the fence. I found B20, parked the motorcycle and went in for the interview. On my way to the assigned room we went through a vast building filled with small reactor projects sporting instruments and equipment I had never seen before.
My interview consisted of two chaps firing technical questions at me. Fortunately I knew most of the answers. In a short space of time I was asked to report for work in the Instrument section. The first day or two being whisked around the various offices of folk such as the Divisional Admin Officer and the Senior Electrical Engineer and given the usual introductory spiel. We new recruits were also asked to go and watch a security film which informed us as to the correct procedure if approached by any Russian agents. This was only a short while after the famous Portland Spy case. We also had to sign the Official Secrets Act. It would be the first of three times I would be asked to sign this document over the course of my career. The security film dealt with the procedure to be followed should one be approached by an attractive Russian lady who might just be an agent. It is to be regretted that never in my time on secret work was I ever approached by a single glamorous Russian lady.

The chaps in the instrument workshop turned out to be a great bunch. We had a marvellous facility consisting of electronic workshops with just about every piece of test gear then available. Right next door was the mechanical shop, well fitted out with the usual lathes, millers and drillers. I remember the first job I was given, this being the routine service and calibration of a Marconi oscilloscope.
In the rooms above us were the physical, electrical and electronic test laboratories plus a standards laboratory. When we had carried out a repair in the workshop, the equipment was sent 'upstairs' for a double check and a calibration certificate would be produced.

As can be imagined, the combination of electronic and mechanical facilities was often employed to good use for 'homers' – i.e. jobs for one's own use. This and the occasional component from stores was known about and accepted by the powers. I recall one senior officer before leaving asking if anyone wanted a stores requisition signed for homers later that day! Homers aside, we were responsible for the repair and maintenance of all commercial instrumentation on the site.
One of the advantages of being on the instrumentation side was that since instrumentation was involved in almost all of the Winfrith projects, one had numerous opportunities to visit most parts of the site. While all was interesting, a building which had a sort of dark fascination for me was the Active Handling building A59. This was one of the larger buildings, fitted with an airlock entrance at the rear to enable large items to be brought in for inspection or decontamination. The working area was continuously under an air control system. The central point was a 'dirty' area where operatives carried out decontamination and inspection of various bits of dodgy stuff from the internals of reactors whilst wearing 'frog' suits supplied with clean air. At this point the air was sucked out to atmosphere via a large filter and chimney. This gave rise to an atmospheric depression which drew air in from the surrounding space. The pressure differential was not noticeable until one opened the door leading to the frog suit changing area when the air could be felt rushing in.
Another area contained a large number of 'hot' cells where work could be carried out on lethally radioactive materials by remote handling devices, the work being viewed safely through a very thick boron-filled window. The intensity of radiation involved was brought

home sharply to me on one occasion when we set up an electronic repeater for a small weighing balance in one cell, prior to use. This had a small plastic window on the front of the instrument which after a few days use had turned black as a result of the radiation. This was due to the presence of a small insignificant looking bit of plumbing which had come from the heart of a reactor.
One disadvantage of any work undertaken in A59, was that you first had to find someone to sign a 'permit to work'. Finding the right person took time. You then had to get past the watch keeper who was often far too concerned about discussing the football results with his mates to attend to you. Finally, you could not take in any tools unless you were prepared to wait for a fortnight or so to get them checked for contamination and then released by the Health Physics lads. Speaking of Health Physics, they had a four storey block to themselves. The top floor accommodated a number of monitoring systems for the whole site. On the wall was a large chart of the general background radiation over a number of years. It was a bit worrying to note a sharp spike in the background radiation (at Winfrith) around the time of the nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll. Although this level had gradually sunk back, it never reached the low level that existed before testing started. I wonder if it ultimately did, and if later incidents like Chernobyl sent it up again. The lower floor of the same building housed a slightly mad Welshman whose filing cabinet contained a number of calibration radioactive sources, which in these times would be considered a serious nuclear hazard!

On a brighter note, I am not aware of any serious incident at Winfrith, despite the vast amount of experimental work carried out. The only incidents which I can recall being some chaps requiring medical attention after trying to clean out a pit with carbon tetra-chloride and one to which I contributed as recorded below:

If an item was required from stores and the item was not held in our local store, this required a visit to Main stores – a large building a considerable distance away to the North of the site. This required vehicular transport. On one occasion two of us needed a reel of cable and we made the trip to Main stores on my motor cycle. The colleague who came with me asked if he might ride the bike back. Foolishly I agreed and we had not gone far before he failed to negotiate a bend and over the grass and pavement we went, being finally stopped by the brick wall of the site control building. Fortunately no serious injuries, although the bike was somewhat bent and dented which required the later services of Reg. Legg.

One of our responsibilities was to maintain the police radio system. As I result of this I received a rather back-handed compliment. The general worker came in to say that he had received a phone call from the North gate, to the effect that they had a problem with the radio. The caller added the line: "Send thick black-bearded fucker – he's the best!"

During my stay at A.E.E[5]. Winfrith, I continued my studies, moving towards the ONC/HNC and managed to rise two grades. Firstly I was made up to Chargehand of the electronics workshop, and later I was to pass a board for Technical Officer Grade 3, although I did not take up duties in this respect, as will be explained later.
My duties as chargehand were not onerous and generally the chaps gave me little trouble. When trouble occurred, it was usually as an action from the younger brigade. The older chaps were most supportive – in particular our watchmaker, a Mr. Ted Ritchie. He was from Liverpool and the first person I had then met from that part of England. When I left the authority he made me a present of a very nice set of B.A. taps and dies which I have to this day. I have always had a large amount of goodwill towards Scousers as a result.

We had a number of apprentices at Winfrith, they were all bright lads and the training they received was excellent as they would be sent to do some time with every department on site – this included the nuclear aspects and general engineering as well as electronics. Two of the apprentices stand out in my memory – one being an exponent at the game of "knuckles", reducing people's pens to an exploded diagram, and putting a crimp tool on to Avo leads, such that the only way it could be removed was to cut through the lead. Another, a rather tall chap was irrepressible. We had a game which consisted of catching hold of the terminals of a

'Variac' (variable transformer). Someone would then slowly turn up the voltage, and the winner was the chap who could hold on longest. This gentleman would simply hold on and grin as the voltage was slowly raised right up to 240! This same gentleman known to us as 'Noddy' was once caught speeding at around 90 M.P.H. through Sandford where the limit was 30. The policeman on his bike had to lay flat along his machine in order to get past. Noddy would probably have got off with a reprimand, except that he protested "But officer, I was only doing JUST over 30!" I was to meet Noddy many years later when, after a very successful career in computing he bought an expensive house on millionaire's row in Studland – otherwise known as the Glebe Estate.

Sadly, around the period I was working at Winfrith, my grandfather died quite suddenly, joining the family grave at Godlingston cemetery on the outskirts of Swanage. The grave houses not just my grandfather and mother, but also an uncle whom I never knew, since he died as the result of a swimming accident at Swanage at an early age and shortly after he had started a career in the Royal Navy. For some inexplicable reason, the headstone which these days is barely readable, does not record R.W. Daw, but just his wife and first son. I hope that in due course I will be able to replace that stone with a better one, recording all who lie there.

During my time at Winfrith and a little before, I had taken up playing Bass guitar firstly in a small band called the Silhouettes and later with a rock group called the Sapphires. We were probably one of the noisiest groups in Dorset, but used to get some good bookings, including a regular one at Bovington Army camp. The group was "managed" by the father of our lead guitarist, Mike Dimarco. Gerry was his name and he was a bit of a character. On our gigs at Bovington he would get as drunk as the squaddies, despite having

The silhouettes at Corfe Castle (*Jim Underdown, myself, Norman Sheasby, Alan Dixon*)

to drive the van back. My favourite trick was to quietly apply the handbrake at Wareham traffic lights, whereupon Gerry would try to drive on, cursing and declaring that "the engine needs a bloody decoke".
Our drummer was a chap called Richard Stonebridge and we got on particularly well together. It was Richard who suggested that we started up our own business and despite the fact that I was about to marry a nice young lady whom I had met via the Swanage Pantomime group, I threw caution to the winds and we started a small electronics business in Swanage having handed in my notice to the authorities at Winfrith.

The Sapphires at Corfe Castle*(Mike Dimarco, Richard Stonebridge, Ray Dimarco & Me)*

In hindsight, it was a very rash move. We had little start-up capital and a minimum of equipment. It was our intention to make and sell HiFi equipment, but we quickly diversified into other things including television and some contract work I had managed to get from Winfrith. I take my hat off to Richard, he was a born salesman and businessman, which to be honest I am not. We did manage to build up the

business but the income was far from great and Anne and I were now expecting Adrian, our son. We had moved to a flat in Station Road – conveniently located just in front of the small premises we had rented. Not a bad little flat with a view over Station road, but access was via a rather slippery stair at the back and living on an upper storey could be hazardous for kids, especially as we once found Adrian exploring the roof on hands and knees!

I should break off here to mention the Swanage pantomime. This was a feature of Swanage life at the time, organised by one Betty Tunnel who managed to attract a good cast from volunteers around. Apart from meeting Anne there (I was doing the sound and she was a dancer), A gentleman called Jack Selby was playing the Genie in "Aladdin's lamp". At various times he was required to appear in a flash and bang, to pronounce: "What is thy command O master". On one occasion he got a bit fed up towards the end and instead came out with a line in a broad Dorset accent, along the lines of: "Wos want this time!" It got the best laugh in the show!

Our wedding at Wareham Congregational Church *A storm broke out as we left for the honeymoon. The car was full of damp confetti!*

After one pantomime on New Years Eve, several of us decided that we would round off the evening with a drink at the Mostyn hotel. As this was some distance away, I was asked to drive there with an unbelievable number of passengers stuffed into the car. It was so full that one chap decided he would ride on the bonnet. Needless to say we were spotted by a couple of policemen and interviewed. As a large number of people proceeded to extricate themselves from the car (all in fancy dress), the sergeant asked politely "Just how many people are in there sir?" meanwhile his associate constable had to turn away as he had been consumed by helpless laughter. Today of course one would be vilified and fined for such action, but this was well before the days of seat-belts and health & safety, and also before the police took to regarding the motorist as an easy cash target. In the event, we were allowed to re-pack the car in sardine fashion and continue, but the bonnet-rider had to walk.

Our company Haybridge Electronics had a brisk shot of business when we met a character who was staying on holiday in Swanage and had recently started his own security business in London. His name was Ken Everitt (Not the disk jockey of the same name). Ken wanted a company to make up some alarm boxes for him which we duly did.
Over a pint one evening Ken mentioned that he had heard of a possible development in the U.S.A. of a rather clever type of burglar alarm. This, he said, used some sort of standing wave within a room to detect movement without the use of switches or wires. (One of the chores of securing a property by electric means being the number of pressure pads, door contacts etc. which need to be wired up).
I could see that such a thing might be possible, but it would need to use ultra-sonics i.e. the frequency would need to be out of the range of human hearing in order for the system to be

un-detectable. I also thought that the detector would need to be of a frequency discriminator type, believing that the movement would cause some Doppler shift of the signal.
Out of curiosity one evening I set up a microphone connected to an oscilloscope to monitor the waveform of the sound produced in the room. I then connected an audio oscillator running at around 1Kc/s to a loudspeaker and moved around the room, noting changes on the oscilloscope. I was amazed at what I detected on the scope. As I moved across the room the amplitude of the received signal was varying by a considerable amount. When I stood still, it was constant. Clearly what I had was the basis for further work – the principle had been established. All that was now needed was to engineer a similar system working above the range of human hearing with some electronics which would detect changes in the received signal strength and close a relay to initiate an alarm!

If only it were that simple!

After much further experimentation we produced and marketed a working device. Ken called it the "Constable" A further feature we had added was the capability of sending the alarm signal to a remote location using the mains wiring – thus eliminating the time consuming and expensive wired systems then in popular use and pre-dating the 'power line transmission' computer systems now in use, by around 40 years. A batch of these were made up and consequently sold, but it was only then did we discover that the system had drawbacks. Firstly, the movement of air around a hot radiator could cause disturbance to the acoustic signal also a ringing telephone bell previously unknown to us, was found to produce harmonics in the ultra-sound range. Both of these could give false alarms and as a result some careful planning had to take place on the installation site.

We had however achieved a major first. We had produced the first commercial ultrasonic alarm to be used in Britain and the press made quite a thing of it. Ken was invited to demonstrate "Constable" on the TV show "Tomorrow's World" with Raymond Baxter.

Constable sales were now taking off and Ken moved production to a firm in London specialising in volume runs, as we could not manufacture to the price and time scales required. It was agreed that Richard would join the London company, with myself the sole director of the Swanage company which we had called "Haybridge Electronics". I was to be retained as consultant to the London company.

Our first house purchase,
8, Grosvenor road, Swanage

Well, all this worked out very well at first and I received enough money such that we were able to buy our first house.

We had been living in a small rented flat in Station Road at Swanage up to then, but before we left this address Anne had given birth to our daughter Susan. Unfortunately some squabbles occurred between members of the new London company and myself, with the result that we had to part company and I was left with Haybridge electronics as a 'one man band' and as such found myself (as a rotten salesman) struggling to get business. I was fortunate enough to do quite a bit of contract work for the Flight Refuelling Company at Wimborne and also received some income from a band I had joined known as the 'Zimbalist'. The point about this band was that unlike the previous Sapphires, we could play *quietly*, and a wide range of styles. The result of this was regular and varied paid work for which at the time, I was most grateful. I was also listed with a Bournemouth agency (Vic Allen Orchestras) and got some bookings with a variety of other bands. These could be a bit unpredictable, since I never knew until the time if I would be playing with a small jazz trio or a large band for say, the president's ball!

A further boost was that I joined forces with a local TV Company and we shared premises. Some work I did for that company (Regent Electrics owned by Mr. Norman Pond) brought in a bit more money.
A promising prospect in London which sadly turned into a dead-end was my brush with the world of support for professional musicians. Richard Stonebridge had introduced me to a chap who ran a company called 'Cabin' in Shepherd's Bush. The purpose of this company was to provide rehearsal studios and various pieces of equipment for some top-line groups of the day. Things started well – I supplied a mixer for the group 'Ten Years After' another device was used by Elton John. After this, I was asked to design and construct an advanced mixing console which Cabin would hire out for general use. This I did and duly supplied to Cabin. Unfortunately I never received payment and I had shelled out quite a bit of cash on the materials – not to mention the late nights finishing the project on time. The mixer was valued at £500.00 which was a considerable sum at the time. I tried all of the normal channels to get the cash without success. I had a contact with the underworld of London and was quite prepared to use that if required, but it transpired that given the backhanders required for the owners of Cabin to be sufficiently 'leant upon', my returns would not have been worth the trouble. A bit of good came out of this though, as 'Ten Years After' had similar problems with Cabin and later dealt directly with me on a couple of projects. I was very impressed by a bass amplifier which Leo the bass guitarist, had bought while in America – the brute power it produced exceeded the pain threshold!

The first house that we purchased (albeit with the inevitable mortgage) was No. 8, Grosvenor road Swanage – a 5-bed terraced house of Victorian vintage which was in a rather shabby state. A considerable amount of our dwindling cash was used to do a good deal of work making the place habitable, but it was a very nice house.

I did a wide variety of electronics work under the Haybridge umbrella – some HiFi, public address and instrumentation in addition to that previously mentioned. One employment side-line came about as I was modifying and upgrading some cinema equipment for a chap known as 'Rusty' Irons, who operated the Wareham cinema. This equipment was destined for the Mowlem Theatre in Swanage. In the course of by dealings with Rusty, he persuaded me to act as one of the projectionists for the cinema. This was not a problem with the major releases, as the film generally arrived in good condition, although it was always wise to check it through. There were occasions where the film would be wound back the wrong way, left in the wrong can or contained breaks. The worst offenders were the kid's Saturday shows, where the film would often be sent out in a deplorable state. The worst was when the film had been spliced 'out of rack', which would cause the picture to be displayed halfway down the screen. When this occurred, there was no option but to stop the show and re-set the film, to the accompaniment of the inevitable slow hand-clap and boos!

One incident which caused a bit of amusement was when a film arrived addressed not to 'The Mowlem', but to 'The New Len'. Ironic, since the manager at the time was a nice chap called Len Leavis. I had greatly impressed him on one occasion by replacing a huge mercury-arc rectifier tube with some insignificant looking solid state diodes. Len thought that this was some kind of magic, and whenever he introduced me to anyone in the bar would start by saying "This is the remarkable chap who replaced a huge valve with a small metal panel"!

I must break here for a moment to recall an interesting series of events which started around this period:

I first met Harold Cyril Spencer (G6NA), when he was working for the Plessey Company in the sixties. Despite the fact that he was shortly to retire, he seemed to appreciate the company of younger chaps and became a member of our local (Swanage) radio club. Later, we were to become firm friends over the period which eventually ended in his death at the age of 95, a few years back.
Some of the lads in the club, regarded him as a bit of a 'line-shooter' as he had described to us a very interesting career, which started when he was an apprentice with Logie-Baird of

television fame and took many interesting turns during the war, when he was greatly involved with radar and also some work at Bletchley Park. There was also a hint or two of clandestine work which had been carried out during the cold war.

The trouble with Spenney (as his friends knew him), was that he was always a bit careful about giving away too much detail. He had a well-practiced method of quickly but politely changing the subject if questioning became too direct.

As mentioned above, I was running a small business in Swanage as a one man band. Not, it has to be said, with any great success, but Spenney would always help out where he could and a business opportunity seemed to arise on the advent of local radio broadcasting, which we were keen to get involved with.

Spenney & I took the train one morning to visit a company called Local Radio Consultants. They were located in South Audley Street, London – not far from the American Embassy. After we had concluded business (we were hoping to sell mixing desks through them), Spenney said "Before we go, I would like you to meet Colonel Stirling, whose office is just downstairs." I was shown in to a panelled office and introduced to a very nice old chap who shook my hand. It was not until some years later, that I realised that I had met David Stirling, founder of the S.A.S.

Fast-forward to the eighties, and I acquire a book by Ranulph Fiennes, entitled "The Feather Men". This is a truly remarkable story about a group of ex S.A.S. men who amongst other things take some direct action against nasty people where the normal channels have proved wanting. The book is ostensibly fiction, but like all the best fiction is based on a good deal of verifiable fact. My attention was sharply awakened when the address of South Audley St. was named as the meeting place of the Feather Men – could this be why Stirling had his office there? Knowing I would never get a direct answer from Spenney, I wrote to Ran. Fiennes and pointed out the coincidences. Ran. Took the trouble to write back in short order and whilst his letter was a jolly good read, he cunningly offered no further clues regarding his book and the parts which were fact or fiction.

A few years before his death, Spenney was resident in a care home in Swanage, where I used to visit him. Despite the effects of a stroke which made conversation difficult, I pointed out to him that I had now put two & two together. I listed the co-incidences from the S.A.S., the Feather men and pointed out that what I now knew about David Stirling, would not lead me to believe that he had any interest in local radio broadcasting. His office in the LRS building in South Audley St. was I concluded, a sham of some sort. Spenney just smiled and said "Yes – it worked very well".

Spenney was certainly no line shooter. He had worked with Bletchley Park as I discovered when the story really broke in the 80's. I was at his home when various staff members were ringing him up for advice as to what they could say to the press. Also one day in the care home an old girl came in to see him. "I worked under him during the war" she explained. "I had to salute and call him sir then". Spenney did admit to me that he had ground the crystals for a radio mentioned in the book "Spycatcher" and also that he had worked on a decorative gift for the Russian Embassy which included a diaphragm in the design. By beaming microwaves through the window, it was possible to hear conversation, due to the Doppler shift on the return signal.

Shortly before he died, Spenney apologised to me for not being more forthright in the past, explaining that a great deal of the work he was involved in was unauthorised in the eyes of the law, and secrecy was required to preserve those still engaged in it.

Sadly, I suspect that I will never know the full story of Ranuph Fiennes, the Feather Men, David Stirling and G6NA.

As I was finding the 'one man band' rather a struggle in terms of doing the work and getting business at the same time, I decided to get a regular job instead and for a short while worked for Robin Hilton at Wareham. He had built up quite a substantial little company whose major customer was the EMS musical synthesiser company of London and we handled their production and commissioning work. EMS had been set up around the same time that Robert Moog had launched his range of synthesisers so we were the British version. EMS had been set up by a group of talented chaps including Peter Zinovieff and Tristram Cary, whose name was known at the time for the work he was doing for the BBC Radiophonics workshop.

While working on the synthesisers I got to know a family who had lived for some time in Australia and reading about the subject along with the first-hand experiences of this family led us to consider a move there. We were still struggling to make ends meet and the kids were just the right age to make the change with no regrets, Britain was in a financial mess and trade was poor. We decided to give it a go. I say "we", although Anne now claims that I walked in one day and announced "We are moving to Australia!"

We were amongst the last of the "ten quid tourists". That meant that after satisfactory interviews with staff from the Australian embassy, our only expense (other than the cost of furniture shipment) would be £10.00 – the rest being met by the nice Australian government who at the time were still trying to promote immigration from Britain.
At last everything was set up. The house had been sold and we had foolishly allowed the buyers to move in to part of the house until we were ready to leave. There were no legal problems but it was a bit of a weird family and some domestic friction resulted. Our things had been packed off to the shipping company in advance of our departure and all we now had to do was arrange the goodbyes and get ourselves to Southampton to catch the boat.

The ship which was to take us around the world was a cruise ship called the *Britannis* and was run by a Greek company. Now registered in Piraeus, the ship had originally started life as a U.S. troop ship dating from WW2 (The Lurline). It was a large and interesting vessel and we had a rather better cabin than some of the fee-paying passengers! On the other hand, we did have a bit of a struggle getting vegetarian food.

Being a cruise ship, we made some interesting stops albeit briefly – I was glad I did not have to pay for the trip, given the day or two that we spent in port. The first stop was the Canary Islands, then Cape Town which we all liked so much it was a wrench to have to return to the ship. After Cape Town came the long haul to Perth in Western Australia, where we landed at Fremantle co-incidentally with a heat wave (hot by even Australian standards). Being determined to see Perth while we had the chance, we took the train in to town. All the doors and windows on the train were wide open and everyone was crying out for a breeze. We had a bit of a walk around Perth, returning that evening.

Next stop was Melbourne where the temperature was much milder. We all liked Melbourne, particularly the kids as we had discovered the most wonderful park with all sorts of swings and slides. One day and back on the ship. Next stop Sydney, where we were to leave the ship. Although we were keen to get on, we had become accustomed to life on board and would leave with a little foreboding. We need not have worried. Sydney is a great place and we were really well looked after. We had one night to spend in a well appointed hostel at which we had a great meal with the luxury of some really fresh vegetables. During the warm evening I took the kids down to the rocky coast line, where enormous seas broke over the rocks.

The next day we called at the Interstate Railway station and boarded the train for a very long overnight trip to Brisbane, where we were to be met by the representative of a building company who had sponsored us, as the plan was to buy one of their houses. As we set off on the long journey a good deal of interstate rivalry was struck up between our guide and the train guard, over the quality of bananas which each state produced. Our guide had the last line, by pointing out that while the New South Wales bananas were straight and well formed, unlike the smaller and curly Queensland ones, they had no flavour at all!

I can certainly testify to the excellent flavour of a Queensland banana.

As dusk fell, we settled in as comfortably as possible for the night, with our guide telling the kids that if they were awake at dawn, they would probably see kangaroos from the carriage window. We eventually got some sleep, only to be awakened a little later when a lady sitting opposite felt a bit unwell and Anne got up to ensure that she was OK.

Dawn rose and we did indeed see wallabies and kangaroos leaping along in the bush near the train. A few hours on and we reached Brisbane Interstate station to be met by our sponsor from the builders. "Welcome to sunny Queensland" he said. There had just been a tropical downpour.

Our sponsor took us to the house in the suburb of Carmel where we were to stay until a deal on our own house was resolved. A last minute shopping expedition became necessary for such things as basic cooking utensils. Our original furniture was to remain in store until required.
Our first night in Queensland was remarkable for the humid heat. It was in the peak of the tropical rainy season and we had not yet become accustomed. Unable to sleep and being curious as to the strange insect noises outside, we went out with a torch to try and identify some of the chirpers and tweeters. Eventually we located one of the noisiest – a cicada in a storm drain. A very small creature for all the noise it made. If we were seen by any of the neighbours, they must have wondered what we were up to!

We never grew tired of observing the native animals of Queensland. It seemed odd to see a large dragon-frilled lizard relaxing on a garden wall or to hear the possums rolling tangerines down a corrugated iron roof. On one drive up into the mountains at Nebo we had to stop and shift an enormous carpet python which was relaxing by lying across the width of the road! Not all the creatures were all that desirable though. Cockroaches were plentiful in a variety of sizes and there was an equally diverse range of spiders. Worst of all were the leeches which if walking without boots in the rain forest would get in between the toes. Not forgetting the bloody mosquitoes!

My next step was to get a job and after making a few enquiries went up to the 'television' mountain Mt. Coot-tha, for an interview with the 'Nine' TV network. I was offered a job and started work as a technician. This proved to be at a most interesting time, since the stations were making the change from very old and outdated monochrome equipment to the very latest colour equipment. I was involved in the change-over.
Not being too fond of the canteen which was rather hot and stuffy and normally served only carnivorous fare, I would come equipped with sandwiches and go for walks around the beautiful woods atop the mountain, enjoying the glimpses of Brisbane from time to time, below.
It was also time to get my own vehicle (I had been scrounging lifts up to now) and I had determined that I would get my first Land Rover and duly secured an acceptable used vehicle from one of the local dealers. Although I could drive on my UK licence I would need to get an Aussie one and here was an odd thing. If I did it in Brisbane, I would have to re-take the test. If however I went out to one of the 'bush' police stations I could simply get a licence issued there and then. You may guess which option I took!

The police in remote places not only had the authority to issue exchange licences, but were also authorised to run tests. While I was exchanging my licence, the officer asked "What about your wife?" "Oh no" I replied. "She has no licence and has only recently been doing some lessons" "No worries – give it a go" was his reply and so off he went with Anne, who had never before driven a Land Rover whose pedals she could not quite reach and whose non-synchromesh gearbox took a bit of getting used to. Anyway, around the block they went, crashing through the gears and eventually parking about four feet out from the pavement by the police station. The officer leapt out grinning. "She'll be right – she's got the general idea" he said and promptly issued a driving licence. This was my first experience of the typical Australian attitude that if something needs to be done, it will be, if at all possible and with the minimum of fuss. How different from the attitude in Britain!

As things turned around, we never did buy a house from our sponsor, the reason being that since house prices had risen considerably since our application, the houses they were building were beyond our means. In any case, we were keen on getting a property in the country where we were able to enjoy the peace and grow our own vegetables, so we ended up buying a colonial style farmhouse near the town of Beaudesert, not far from the border with New South Wales. The house was typical of Queensland construction, being made of timber with a verandah on two sides, the whole being raised off the ground by around five feet by timber stumps. The farm was originally a 200 acre dairy farm which was being sold in ten acre blocks. We were fortunate to have bought the farmhouse, milking bails, barn and yards. There was also a dam for water, although our drinking water was collected from the roof into two 1000 gallon tanks. There was a bathroom, although the lavatory or 'dunny' as locally known was just down the garden. Around the house were citrus trees and an excellent lemon tree grew close to the stairs leading up to the kitchen, which Anne made very good use of, producing some excellent ginger beer.

Before long we had acquired a variety of animals. These included chickens, dogs, geese ducks and a number of calves which the local farmer did not want. In addition we had a lovely house cow.

The farm house at Gleneagle near Beaudesert

She was a Hereford of very amiable disposition who provided us with both entertainment and milk. On a warm evening I would go out into the field and sit down with my back against the cow and look at the stars. Cows are much more alert than folk might think, and she would notice any distant sound and briefly stop chewing the cud to have a look around. She could be a mischief from time to time and once when the garden gate was left open, got under the house and started rifling through the pumpkins we had stored there. On being told to leave she did so with a show of defiance – kicking and bucking on the way out.

Susan & Adrian gather pumpkins at Gleneagle

The floor joists under the house formed a luxurious residence for a considerable number of attractive tree frogs, some coloured green, some brown. At a trigger caused by a change in the weather, they and the cicadas, would open up in song. On one occasion the house was invaded by flying ants. Adrian sent Susan out of their bedroom one night to say that there were 'magnets' in the bedroom. Puzzled as to what this could be, it turned out that he really meant maggots! It turned out that thousands of the creatures had flown in and shed their wings, leaving crawlies all over the verandah and into a bedroom. It took us quite a while to sweep them all up and put them out in the garden.

About this time, although happy with the job at the Nine network, I did not feel that my skills were being used to the full. In particular I was much more interested in the audio side of things than in television. As a result I had met a Malcolm McIntosh who was originally employed by the Nine network but had taken the plunge and started his own business and was involved in manufacturing various bits and pieces of equipment for broadcasting and audio-visual distribution systems for schools. We discovered that we both had a passion for good quality audio and he eventually took me on as he was about to branch into making broadcast audio mixing desks.

Well, we were an ideal pair. Malcolm was an excellent business man and had some good contacts throughout Australia. In no time the business flourished, I was (as Chief engineer) getting very well paid and the staff now also included an electrician, a technician and a secretary. We also gave good business to a local draughtsman and a manufacturer of printed circuit boards. Anne was also employed in a part time capacity, assembling components at home. From time to time I would get requests from her for 'silver triangles', 'green rectangles' amongst others, the latter being her description of transistors and polyester capacitors!
The business continued to grow. We were starting to supply audio mixers to all parts of Australia and good quality stuff it was. We even managed to out-specify the most revered brand of the time, Rupert Neve. This resulted in Malcolm being able to invoke a useful Australian rule which required that if a local company produced something of equal or better specification, an import duty would be slapped on the foreign competition. Good for Australia! During my time with Malcolm, I achieved the Broadcast Operators certificate and joined the Institution of Radio and Electronics engineers (IREE).

In order to achieve the Broadcast Ops. Certificate, I had of course to pass a theoretical exam, held in the Post Office building at Brisbane. It did not help concentration that staff in the next room were constantly adjusting telephone bells! I was later to return to the same building for

a practical test. This consisted of adjusting and fault finding on a large medium-wave broadcast transmitter of considerable age. This huge beast employed large triode valves of the 'bright emitter' type, where the filaments were glowing like street lights. The examiner said: "I've put a fault on this and want you to find it." Immediately I noticed that two of the modulator output valves were not lit and having mentioned the fact was about to find out why, until the examiner told me not to bother. He was delighted that I had spotted the problem at once. "The last chap I had here" he said, "could not see that at all. I gave up after he had spent around 15 minutes messing around with a distortion measuring set!" We both laughed, since you could clearly see the fault from fifty feet away.

Working at MTE Electronics

Although things on the work front were doing well, on the home front things had been spoilt somewhat when a most undesirable pair bought the plot next door and started to make our lives at home a misery. Firstly the husband bought a load of wild pigs which were forever getting out and damaging our crops. He was a rather nasty type who could be relied on to be getting up to mischief of one sort or another. I even caught him letting out my chickens on one occasion. He bought in other animals which he kept in very poor condition, and the police had to be called in on several occasions.

This combined perhaps with itchy feet prompted us to return to the UK. Property prices had risen in Australia more than in the UK so the time seemed to be right for a change. So regretful at leaving our friends we hopped aboard various aircraft to make the journey back to Britain. We went by Singapore Airlines who had a deservedly good reputation and a highlight of the trip was a free stop for a week in Singapore on the way – in a luxury hotel with a number of interesting tours of Singapore and Malaysia included. The week in Singapore was enjoyed by all and we were very impressed by what could be bought with Australian dollars. While there, I had two suits made and Anne a couple of dresses. All very good quality and run up overnight!

A street scene from Singapore – on the return trip.

One evening we wandered down to the sea and decided to hire a boatman to take us around the bay. Despite the language difficulties, he gave us an excellent tour. We were so pleased that we insisted on paying him well over the paltry sum he required, leaving him well pleased.

On the trip from Australia the aircraft had made quite a few landings and take-offs and the result of the pressure variations had caused my ears to behave rather strangely. This was compounded on our first evening at the hotel when I dived deep into a swimming pool and as a result of all this, one ear started to bleed. It was not a serious problem though and cleared up quickly. I had reason to recall this many years later when I had to have some serious treatment for an ear problem and the specialist told me that what I had was once known as 'Singapore ear'! I think this was a coincidence, but it might well be that the trouble had started on this visit.

We had a number of short stops at other airports along the way to the UK and were usually allowed to walk around while the plane was being serviced. One stop which will always stand out in my memory was Calcutta. I had always thought of India as a warm country but on this occasion, Calcutta was freezing cold and enveloped in damp fog. We foolishly went to the toilet. I have never before or since seen such a dirty, scruffy and dilapidated set of facilities as there were at Calcutta. There was no soap or towels, this being made up for by some scruffy erks selling liquid soap at the exit. The Airport was well populated with what appeared to be teenage thugs armed with machine guns. Although I have had over the years, many good friends who originate from India, I have never felt any desire to visit that country again.

Chapter 7 – Back to Britain

We needed somewhere to live and spent quite a bit of time wandering around Britain to see what was available. Having spent some time with my brother in law in North Yorkshire, I quite fancied the idea of settling there, but even in the depths of the countryside, prices were surprisingly high.
We had bought a beaten up old Land Rover whilst staying with a friend in London and our travels resulted in us spending a few nights sleeping within. We had little ready cash available, so it came as a bit of a shock when the clutch gave way somewhere near Droitwich. We made it off the motorway and managed to crawl to a little village called Flore, which fortunately sported a good garage. It transpired that the poor old Land Rover was even more dilapidated than we thought, since not only was there a problem with the clutch, the gearbox required attention as well, requiring a couple of days work.
The garage kindly arranged for us to stay overnight at quite a posh nearby hotel, called the 'Westone', for which we had just about enough cash. We duly arrived there somewhat scruffy after our travels but were very well received. The next day we had to hunt for some cash as the garage bill would be quite substantial. Fortunately I had an account with the Leeds Permanent Building Society and we were fortunate enough to find a local branch.

After kicking our heels around Flore for a day, the vehicle was completed and we were able to complete our journeys, finishing back in good old Dorset where my mum was good enough to put us all up while we looked around for a house. We eventually happened upon a nice little terraced house in the same town – Wareham. We liked the place so much we put down a small deposit to secure – this consisting of all our loose cash plus a bit from my mum which she had in here purse!

The next thing was to secure a mortgage. This posed a bit of a problem since I was not at the time, working. I was doing a bit of part time work for a local company making radio microphones, but this was peanuts. I struck a deal with the proprietor who gave me a glowing letter saying that I was about to be taken on full time at a substantial wage. This did the trick, but I now needed a real job! This was the first and only time I have obtained a mortgage whilst unemployed, but at the time I knew there were plenty of good jobs around, it was a question of looking and I subsequently got a job as senior engineer with J&S Sieger, manufacturers of gas detection equipment. Once again, I was to sign the official secrets act, since this involved defence work. The work involved design of an automated leak detection system for missile silos (Hydrazine and Nitrous Oxide fuels).

We moved in to 30 West st. Wareham – a very pleasant house, after the usual delays involved in buying or selling property. Since we had moved to Wareham, Adrian had started at the local school where I once attended when it was a secondary school. At a parent/teacher meeting a teacher approached me as to why it was that Adrian always removed his shoes when entering the school. I had to explain that Adrian's last school was out in the Australian bush, and in the hot climate it was quite normal for the kids to go to school without shoes of any kind!

After only a matter of months into the new job and the life once again in England, I started to get itchy feet again. The job was OK, but not exciting although I had made quite a few new friends. I was getting letters from Malcolm in Australia telling me how well things were going and pointing out that my job was still open for a good deal of money.
Things in Britain had gone from bad to worse under the Callahan government (Labour of course) and after due consideration we decided that a return to Sunny Queensland might not be a bad idea – even though this time we would have to pay the full whack! What to do about our house? Should we sell it? In the end a novel situation arose whereby we let it out to my sister and her husband at a subsidised rate. It helped them out and we did not need to sell up, as the job in Australia would enable us to look for a place right away.

Chapter 8 – Back to sunny Queensland!

Malcolm had done us proud. Not only was I ensconced in my old job, He had arranged for us to rent a house in the Brisbane suburb of Ashgrove. This belonged to a mutual friend, an engineer called Greg Ball, who had been doing some design contract work for Malcolm in my absence. One of his designs was for a high power quality audio amplifier, which was his speciality. The reason Greg's old house was vacant, was that he and his wife had "fallen in love" with a very nice property a little farther out and although they had to stretch themselves financially, they had moved out before selling the old place. Greg's old house suited us nicely. Again, a traditional Queensland colonial house of wood and raised up on stilts. Although various prospective buyers came to look at the place whilst we were there, we noticed little enthusiasm from them. One reason may have been that Greg in his student days, had decided to paint the living room black. This included the ceiling.

Needless to say, we were anxious to get out into the bush again and start growing our own crops. It just happened that another large acreage had been bought by developers in Greenbank, about forty miles out from Brisbane, and was being sold as five and ten acre lots with the promise of a new house built to modest size, but also modest price. These included drainage (septic system) and drinking water tanks, but the inside was to be finished in plasterboard only, the new owner to be responsible for all interior joinery and finish. This suited us down to the ground and a contract was duly signed. From time to time we would make the journey to view progress on the new house, and sometimes in the evening I would make the drive out to complete some of the necessary carpentry. This was not much fun as the work had to be done with the aid of a single hurricane lamp, there being no electricity supply; something I would rectify later.

The Greenbank house under construction.

We eventually moved in and were at first quite pleased with the place, despite the fact that I still had a considerable amount of work to do with carpentry inside. Our water as usual, came from a tank which collected rainwater. This was about a quarter full when we moved in, but it was the height of the dry season and eventually we had to order some water by tanker. When the driver filled the tank with the full 1000 Gallons, it was clear that the builders had no idea of the weight encountered, and the wooden base bulged out alarmingly! As all of the tanks on the new houses were the same, they had a considerable job of rectification! Another thing which seemed rather strange was that after the tank had run out and was refilled, there was no water supply to the bathroom. Inspection showed that the plumber (possibly used to properties with mains water), had run the bathroom feed above the level of the tank! He probably later realised the error and bodged the situation by sucking the water through and creating a siphon. This of course worked fine until the water ran out and the siphon was broken – so that was another recall.

We were anxious to get a vegetable plot started as soon as possible and I took a soil sample in for analysis. The lab assistant pointed out that it was one of the worst he had seen as regards fertility, so a good deal of manure was required.

We acquired some horses – something I had always wanted, but too expensive in the UK. Here we obtained a beautiful mare in foal for just 250 dollars, plus some tack. Subsequently we also acquired a "brumbie" – a local Australian breed. It was great to be able to go for a

ride in the forest, but one had to be careful as wallabies would often jump out of the bush and scare the horses.
From time to time I would call in at a feedstock supplier on the way to work. It was a standard order: "A sack of dog, a sack of cat, a sack of horse nuts and a bale of hay". On one occasion, I had difficulty in locating the hay. After two searches, I said to the chap who insisted there was some at the back of the warehouse, "If there is hay down there my name is Mahatma Ghandi". He came down with me and located some hay. In a typical casual Australian manner the store man said "I guess we had better call you Mahatma Ghandi"……

The dog we had at the time was a German Shepherd (Fritz) who acquired US when out riding one day. We never found who his original owner was so we kept him. He was a lovely dog and we considered bringing him back to the UK, but in the end left him at home with the new property owners. He seemed quite happy with them, but when I paid them a visit just before we left, he held on to my leg with both his front paws – something I had never known a dog do before or since. I had a job to leave him, but given his age, it was the wisest thing to do.

Bess and her foal at Greenbank.

I decided to invest in a decent diesel powered generator, and ordered one from the Lister Company in Brisbane. On entering their offices, I was amazed to see a large picture of Corfe-castle on the wall! There turned out to be no connection though, it was simply a poster of some sort, despite Lister's parent company being based in the U.K.

I had built a shed for the generator, from concrete blocks and a good concrete foundation was already in place when I went and collected the set from Lister's in the Landrover. No problem getting it on from the works – they used a fork-lift. Getting it out and into the shed was a different matter. It was a 5KVA unit with a single-cylinder engine, the lot mounted on substantial steel girders. It weighed rather a lot. Fortunately, I was able to round up a group of helpful neighbours and four of us managed to manhandle it into position. From then on, we were well supplied with power, even for cooking. I wired up the starter battery between earth and neutral and this meant that when the generator was not running we could read by 12V night lights or watch TV. My system meant that you could pick off either 240V ac or 12V dc from any of the standard 3-pin plugs.

We had to watch the loading of the generator when cooking, since if everything were switched on at the cooker, the resultant load was more than the generator would handle and down would go the volts, with much barking from the generator. This came to a head on one occasion when I was using a computer and Anne was cooking. She was careful not to overload the generator, but on this occasion one of the kids switched on an electric fire. As soon as I saw the data on the computer screen begin to wobble, I knew I was doomed to

complete loss of the work I had just typed in! As a result of this I devised a time-sharing device to dish out the supply to the cooker on an even basis. This meant that you could use all of the cooker without an overload! I later published an article on this device in "Wireless World".

We were suffering loss of some chickens as a result of marauding dogs and foxes. Determined to do something to ameliorate this, I firstly spent a night in the generator shed with a rifle for company. On one occasion I awoke just in time to see a pack of dogs making

off in the distance. On another time I did surprise a beautiful blonde fox, right in my sights. Such a lovely creature, I just could not shoot it – simply advised it not to return!
I eventually solved the problem by electronic means. Malcolm had given me a huge capacitor which had once formed part of a TV transmitter power supply. It had the value of 8 microFarads and a working voltage of 20,000 Volts. It was half the size of a tea-chest and sported large porcelain insulators. It was such a thing of beauty that we could not throw it out, although it clearly had no domestic use – or so I originally thought.

My solution to the fox/dog problem was to construct an electric fence around the chicken run which would have done justice to a Nazi prisoner of war camp. The fence was a screen of wire mesh, insulated from the ground by a series of milk bottles. The energy came from the capacitor which was charged overnight by the extra high-tension circuit of an old portable TV which in turn ran from the generator battery. This provided a fence which was energised at a voltage of around 17,000 volts and the capacitor would probably provide enough energy to knock a cow down. We never lost a chicken again, although clearly domestic precautions were required! Each morning I would switch off and discharge the fence by throwing some wire against it with much sparking and crackling. This procedure had the disturbing tendency to start small bush-fires if I was not careful.

Anne meanwhile was working again – for a while she worked in a rather smelly chicken processing factory – rather ironic, since neither of us ate meat, but the money was very good. Later on she returned to her original profession, nursing, this time in an old people's home in Brisbane. This work involved late shifts and I would often wake up late at night to hear Anne returning (at some speed), along the dirt roads. She was given the title of "Fastest nurse in Queensland".

I don't know why, but we inevitably seemed to end up with dodgy neighbours when living in the bush – completely out of character with most of the Australians. When we lived in Beaudesert it was a character named Poschalk who bought the plot alongside ours and ruined an idyllic existence. In this case not long after we had moved to Greenbank another ghastly character moved on to the plot next door, complete with a load of yapping dogs. This chap was called Bock.
His bad behaviour spread to the extent that he was eventually up against the whole district and was forced to move out. This time I decided to buy the block myself, to prevent the same thing happening again although for a while a lovely couple had lived there with whom we became firm friends. The sale of next door had nearly gone through – I had even arranged a loan through the university credit union, but I managed to cancel the sale just in time as Anne felt that she missed the house we retained in Wareham! Once again we had to up sticks and sell up prior to our return to Britain. While the Greenbank property was sold we hired a rather luxurious flat just across the Brisbane river from the University and fortunately there was a small ferry service nearby, which allowed me to walk to work.

The ferry trip was interesting for two reasons. Firstly the operator always had two beautiful Dingos curled up in the prow. He claimed that they were Basengi dogs, as keeping Dingos was not allowed. Having challenged him on the breed, I got a quiet smile to the effect that my assumption was correct!

The other interesting feature of the short trip was the amount of cross-steering necessary due to the current of the fast flowing river. On one occasion the throttle linkage to the engine broke and in true Australian tradition, the operator shouted to me to take the steering, while he controlled the engine below. Something had to be done quickly, before we were well downstream. I had never steered a ferry before, so it was with some surprise that I managed to land a ferry full of people just at the right place in the dock!

I must back track a little and explain that my job at this time was providing electronics support to the dept. of Geology & Mineralogy, University of Queensland. This resulted not from any ill feeling with Malcolm, but with my need to do some more challenging work. When you have achieved a microphone amplifier with a noise figure within 1 decibel of the theoretical limit and reduced distortion to the noise floor, the only engineering work left to do is to locate the 'boxes' in the mixer to suit customer's requirements. I saw the job at the University and decided to apply. Having sent in my papers, I was grilled by a board of daunting academics who were the heads of various departments – two of which I became firm friends with. In addition to offering much varied work, the job offered other things. Firstly, attendance was based upon unlimited flexitime. I could work when I liked. Secondly I was free to take up some research of my own and thirdly I could undertake a University course within the 'firm's' time and for no cost. The only down side was that the salary was quite a bit less than I was presently receiving, but nonetheless, not bad.

Breaking the news to Malcolm, I explained that I was not leaving him in the lurch and would be happy to act as his consultant as and when required and this arrangement worked very well.

The University job worked out very well. For one thing the large campus was a lovely area with large gardens and a lake, the Brisbane river flowing by the perimeter. The main buildings where I was working were fine sandstone buildings with a central courtyard and arched corridors connecting the various faculties. The University had expanded widely over the years and also on site were a vast number of other, later buildings housing other faculties. The subjects covered seemingly included everything – all the sciences, arts, veterinary school and medical school.

Not all time was spent in my laboratory however. From time to time a note would come from the head of department inviting staff to attend a party and we would troop along, willingly partake of the fine food, drink and company whilst being paid to do it. There can not be many jobs to beat that one! In addition we would often go out on field trips – sometimes to some remote part of Australia to investigate some form of geophysics or seismology, at other times a sea trip might be on to the Barrier reef for some oceanographic work – always of course accompanied by a decent supply of beer wine and food.

A further advantage of the University was that I could take the kids in to work. Anne was working at this time nursing, and I took the kids in knowing that they could be safely released to amuse themselves for the day in the libraries, displays and grounds. Only much later was I to learn that they were also going on voyages of discovery to cellars, towers, roofs and various places which were not strictly in bounds!
I worked closely with the academic staff and became good friends with Dr. Sidney Hall with whom I travelled to a number of remote places in Australia, where we were trying out an idea of Sid's, which was to locate ore bodies by means of a rotating dipole of electromagnetic energy transmitted to the ground. It was whilst travelling with Sid out from Townsville on one trip, when I adjusted the position of the bench seat in the van which I was driving. I had not realised that Sid had fallen asleep. As I moved the seat, he awoke with a start. "Good heavens" he said "I thought the vehicle was coming apart!" On another occasion whilst prospecting in the wilds of New South Wales we had the embarrassing situation of burning our camping site down due to not having properly extinguished the camp fire after breakfast. Fortunately we were given some superb quarters by a drilling crew operating nearby – followed some weeks after by a grilling by the laboratory manager on return to the university.

Another good friend (we remain in touch to this day), was Prof. Gerald Sargeant whose forte was oceanography. This would take us on some interesting water-borne trips. I vividly recall messing around in a small dingy in the middle of the Brisbane river, while Gerald was flapping his arms in the vain hope that he could persuade a huge tanker to steer around us! One of the problems was the weight of some of the kit. We were struggling to load some heavy kit on to the university's research vessel on one occasion, when the skipper made some remark about it not being so much the size, as the "awkwardness" of the equipment, to which our lab assistant muttered through gritted teeth, that he thought that there might just be a bit of weight involved as well. Many years hence, Gerald and his wife came and stayed with us in Wales. It was wonderful to see him once again and to meet his wife for the first time. Although Gerald is a licensed amateur like me, he had not been very active in the hobby for some time and brought with him an excellent VHF radio for me, which was accepted with some enthusiasm!

One trip to the reef sticks in my mind. It started with an air trip to Townsville from where we were to embark on to one of the University's research vessels. This was a nice tidy boat, formerly a trawler, but done out with comfortable accommodation. I thought a bit odd that the boat seemed to roll quite a bit while in harbour. After a good meal, I turned in as the skipper would be making the trip to the reef during the night. I woke up as the vessel was leaving harbour to reach the deceptively named 'Pacific' ocean. The rolling had increased alarmingly, although the sea was not very heavy. I had to wedge myself into the bunk to avoid falling out. The next morning with the boat still very lively, we had to fill some long hydrophones with some evil smelling oil. That was enough to send me to the side of the boat. I very seasick for the first time ever and the effects took a number of days to recover from and for me to acclimatise! Having got used to the motions of our rolling trawler, it came as a shock to be invited on to a large light ship a week later, to see a movie. I had become so used to the motion that I could swear that the larger ship was set in concrete, rather than being afloat!

Other than the seasickness, the trip was marvellous and it was a privilege to see so much of the reef and it's islands and to land at Cooktown, a most beautiful little seaside town to the North where the streets have avenues of mango trees planted by some thoughtful pioneer and upon which we immediately set, not having had any fresh fruit for quite a while. We also had the privilege of a short stay on Heron Island – a nature reserve which forms part of the reef. There was a small contingent of scientists staying there and we enjoyed a wonderful meal with them, afterwards enjoying the tropical sunset whilst lying on the beach with a drink.

I remember the fine times and friends from that period well. British Universities are dull and stilted places by comparison – and that is without taking account of the climate!

In our earlier period in Australia, we had acquired Australian citizenship. The ceremony involved relinquishing all allegiance to the Queen of Great Britain and swearing allegiance to the Queen of Australia. Fortunately, this happened to be the same Queen! I have a great deal of affection and regard for the folk in Australia, whilst my respect and trust of the establishment in Britain has inexorably dwindled over the years. If by some miracle I was to stumble upon some discovery which would benefit mankind (an anti-gravity machine perhaps?) I rather think that I would take it to the Australian government in the knowledge that it would be put to good use.

Goodbye again to Australia. Will we meet once more?

Central Brisbane from the river.

The Treasury building in Brisbane

Adrian and Susan by the Brisbane river. Queensland university is on the far shore.

Chapter 9 – The UK – again and Wareham.

We landed as usual, with no visible means of support except that this time we did have a house to go to. Sadly we had no option but to cut short the tenancy of Judy & Peter the more so as the original plan was to eventually sell the house to them. At least they did have a bit of time which helped in getting them into the housing chain – no mean feat in Dorset, even back then. Although I sometimes miss Australia and the old friends there even now, I have never yet felt the burning desire to again go and live in another country.

The kids now attended The Purbeck School, a monstrous modern building erected in later years on the other side of West Street from the old secondary modern. I had to look again for a job and one seemed to pop up from the blue. A woman whom we knew from our days in Grosvernor road, Swanage had married and was now living almost opposite us in West Street. One day she said I hear you are looking for a job – you are an electronics designer I believe?
After concurring, she took me to meet her husband Alex Miller who was at the time managing Datanomics, one of a group of companies run by a determined businessman called Richard Howling and as a result of meeting these two gentlemen, I was employed at Datanomics on a variety of electronic design tasks. These included some work on medical equipment, musical synthesisers (Howling had acquired the EMS synthesiser company), and paper making control gear.

The Paper making was as a result of a linkage with the firm of Portals Ltd. Based at Overton Hants., who specialised in banknote paper manufacturing. This turned out to be most interesting and resulted in a number of visits to their plant at Overton. I was responsible for re-designing some thread-break detection apparatus and the equipment which dumps ink on paper to indicate a rejected area. This all involved work on the machines which were massive and I have memories of balancing an oscilloscope on one pipe whilst standing on another, water dripping down from above and steam rising through my trousers!

The synthi 100 which I completely re-designed for Datanomics.
This machine was delivered to Madrid.

Portals had a company association with a paper mill in Landquart, Switzerland where 500 Franc notepaper was made and to my delight I had a couple of trips to Switzerland as a result. The paper mill was set in the most beautiful countryside and close to a range of mountains. Alex and I when time allowed, travelled on the train to various parts and explored the mountain trails. The Swiss chaps were great company, and we would join them for a drink after work. We were given an interesting tour of a number of hydro-electric power plants, one of which supplied the factory and it was noticeable that a relatively small river coming down the mountain was capable of supplying three sets of generators on the way down.

We had become accustomed when noting anything down, to tearing off a section of banknote paper and scribbling on it. On one occasion, the security guard at Overton was not pleased to find that we had brought back from Switzerland around a square meter of 500 Franc banknote paper!

It was around this time that a near disaster occurred. I was working in my attic workshop in Wareham one afternoon when I heard the ambulance blaring down the street. This was not unusual, since the depot was just up the road. I was shortly to learn of the significance of this particular ambulance when someone called to say that Adrian had been knocked down in South Street. I arrived to find him in a confused heap in the road. I travelled in the ambulance to Poole hospital where he was found to be generally OK apart from some possible internal damage. This turned out to be the case and Adrian spent quite a bit of time in hospital, firstly in Dorset and later in Bristol where he was to have an important operation which fortunately was successful, but it was a long and stressful business, particularly as the surgeon had decided that it might not be possible to repair the damage and Adrian would from then require an external bag. Fortunately this did not satisfy Anne, who was at pains to point out that if the NHS were capable of grafting a penis on to a transvestite, the work that Adrian would need should not pose an insurmountable problem. The point was taken.

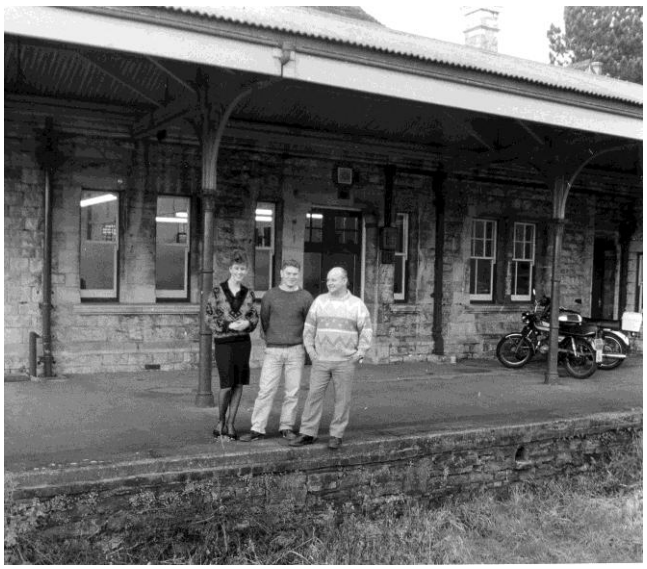
At Datanomics, I worked closely with Alex and also the production manager John Mullins. We would often get together in the Square & Compass pub at Worth Matravers and one evening the conversation turned to starting our own business as we thought that quite a lot of opportunities were being wasted at Datanomics. In fairly short order we acquired a company called Eastpoint Ltd and one of the first items on the agenda was to locate suitable premises. We spent a bit of time looking at some new industrial units, but these were more suitable for heavier engineering and production. We were after more comfortable office-oriented accommodation.

I had been aware of the fate of the railway station at Corfe Castle over the years since its closure in 1972. For a while it was the British Legion club, but when they moved, the station was boarded up and left to the weeds and vandals. Even the approach road to the station had become something of a jungle and a graveyard for abandoned cars. One evening when the subject of our company premises was still undecided, I mentioned the station more in jest than otherwise. As we were on the way to the Square & Compass one rainy evening, I took the lads down Station road for a look. John was amazed as he had no idea the station existed! Despite the fact that rain was pouring through the roof of the goods shed, everyone decided that if it were possible to obtain a lease on the station from the current owners (Dorset County Council), the station with quite a bit of work, would make an ideal home for Eastpoint.

I was later charged with contacting the Council to enquire as to the possibilities. It turned out we were told, that our timing was immaculate. The Council was worried about the state of the place and were keen to get a suitable tenant for a five year lease on a peppercorn rent. The reason that the five years was stipulated was due to the fact that a lot of activity was taking place to arrange a road bypass for Corfe and not only we were told, was it quite possible that the track would be used as the bypass, the station may in the future be demolished to make way for a car park. "Over my dead body" I remarked under my breath!

So we took over the poor dilapidated station and I recall the joy of ripping off the window boarding and letting light and air into the musty interior. It brought back quite a few memories of the time I had spent there as a child. It was agreed that I could have my old bedroom as my laboratory. A great deal of work needed doing – mostly by John and myself as Alex in his new role of Managing Director was spending time in trying to drum up the business we would need to pay for it all. Roofs needed repairing and the whole station was painted inside and out. I also renewed a large number of window panes which had received the attention of vandals. Although not strictly necessary, the platform canopy was also repainted with Susan and a friend painting the top. Both Susan and Adrian had already

helped with the general clearing. Finally, the interior was fitted out and carpeted, the electricity supply re-connected and we were ready to start work.



At this time I had no car and was dependent upon cycling or bussing to and from Wareham. This was a bit of a nuisance and in any case, I was always keen to return to Corfe. A large Elizabethan manor house had come up for sale and Anne & I had tried to do a deal with my mother and Vic. for a joint ownership. Although at first quite enthusiastic, they later decided not to go ahead, so I was rather pleased when a substantial house came on the market at 115 East Street, just opposite Halves Cottages. A look

A group of Eastpoint staff at Corfe Castle.

Around confirmed that this was ideal and having practically paid for the house in Wareham, we were in a good position to buy and did, although we left the little house in Wareham with some sadness.

A Christmas at Corfe Castle

It was good to return to the village of Corfe Castle and a major bonus was the ability to walk into work and nip home for lunch. Although the garden at 115 was very pleasant, there was not quite enough land for all the vegetables which I needed to grow, so I enquired of our business landlords as to whether or not the old stationmaster's garden was in use and as a result was given the go ahead to use it. This I remembered from childhood, when my grandfather would put it to good use.

The garden was set across the yard from the station buildings and was on a ridge left when the station yard area was levelled at the time the station was built. I noticed that a door had been let into the wall dividing the garden from Morton's House (The manor house I had originally hoped to buy). I could not recall this being there in earlier years and it turned out

that my memory had been correct, since I was surprised to find that the garden had been included in the estate of Morton's House!

Enquiries of the County Council revealed that as far as they were aware, they still owned it and a dispute arose. It seemed that the last but one owner of Morton's House had simply taken over the garden and then had the cheek to sell it on! An arrangement was eventually reached with the new buyer of Morton's, that they would be permitted a small part of the garden to keep, while I continued with the rest, which was quite adequate, although I was sorry to see the garden split up. Morton's House is currently a hotel.

John and I put in a great deal of work restoring the station buildings with him and his family concentrating on the inside and myself re-painting the exterior and replacing items such as the lead flashing which had been damaged or stolen. A great deal of window glass had been smashed including all of the windows of the booking hall. It took me quite a while to rectify that!

The business swung into action and from the start was very successful. We had an ideal team with Alex having sales and administration talents, John looking after production and myself as technical director. For the first few years profits rolled in and all went well. We had work from a number of prestige customers including Rolls-Royce, M.L. Aviation, British Aerospace, Plessey, Martin-Baker Aircraft, Portals (Banknote paper makers) and even Scotland Yard. The Scotland Yard orders were for some communication simulators to mimic crisis situations and were computer controlled. I was surprised to receive a call from the Yard one morning, requesting backup disks for the operating software. "But I left you with two copies" I explained. After a short silence, the reason was made clear. Someone had stolen the disks! I have to admit to being a bit absent-minded at the best of times. A fine example of my shortcomings occurred on a later visit to the Yard. I Breezed up to the front desk, only to realise that I was not carrying any I.D. and had forgotten the name of the chap I was supposed to report to! Fortunately the lovely lady at the desk took pity on me and restored the situation with a few phone calls.

We also did a great deal of work for the Metal Box company at Poole. These chaps produced just about every type of jar closure from big metal stamping machines. I designed a series of electronic units to monitor the die for overload, and they bought quite a large number. These finished lids were visually inspected by ladies as they came off the production line and there was clearly a market for some form of automated machine inspection which Alex eagerly seized upon. After some preliminary research and experiments I concluded that desirable though the commercial case was, the technology to hand would not permit us to produce working equipment without very considerable financial input and research time. The now familiar small and accurate cameras were not available then.

The trouble was that Alex could only see the end profits of such a system and waived aside my warnings, eventually employing another engineer to specifically take on the design work. Needless to say, the equipment was never very good and was flatly rejected by the customer. In the meantime a great deal of money had been wasted on it. This matter plus other interests which I had by then acquired gave rise to friction and would ultimately end with my resignation from Eastpoint. About a year or so after I left, the bank decided to call in the company overdraft. Given the parlous state in which the machine inspection debacle had left Eastpoint, this final straw led to receivership of what was once a very successful little company. As it happened, the timing was of benefit to Corfe station, as the Swanage Railway group were then in a position to take over the buildings, thus avoiding another period of empty dereliction.
I will avoid trying to relate much history of the Swanage Railway Company, as this has been exhaustively recorded by Andrew Wright[6]. Sufficient to say that I was a founder member, always keen to see the railway restored and was able to give the movement quite a bit of help. I remain a life member of this very successful group.

I will mention one personal incident related to Swanage Railway which could have ended badly. I served on the liaison group in order to provide linkage with the District Council and at one of the meetings I was to encounter a rather unpleasant and bossy character who had been taken on by the railway as he was an accountant, noted for his skills in that field. It had been an unfortunate appointment since the individual (I will call him 'X') had started to cause division and alarm when throwing his weight around, criticising others and making unauthorised communication with the County Council. Having observed what was going on, I wrote to the officers of Council pointing out the chap's attitude, the harm he was causing and warning them to disregard un-authorised communication for him. As a matter of courtesy, I copied the letter to Bill Trite the railway trust chairman. Unfortunately some bright spark made copies of this confidential letter and posed them all around Swanage station with the result that X started a libel action in the high court against Bill and me.
A libel action even if eventually dismissed, can lead to great expense and worry. After paying a considerable sum to a Wareham solicitor just for some preliminary letters I was getting rather worried about the situation, so it was with some delight that a gentleman called David Morgan called out of the blue. David was a very well-known solicitor who had done some wonderful work for many of the preserved railways and he suggested that he would be prepared to handle our case for no fee, in response to the support I had provided to Swanage railway. This was an immense relief and the silly thing was that as X eventually let the action drag on for so long, David was able to raise a 'time summons' against X with the delightful result that he had to pay all of the costs. I was to meet David again in later years when acting for the local restoration project on Anglesey. A group of us visited him in London, where he amazed everyone present by a simple phone call which eliminated a blockage due to Network Rail. "Would it help if I had a question raised in the House of Lords?" we heard him say. It did the trick…

I can not leave Eastpoint without recalling an incident which rather troubled me. The famous ejection seat company Martin-Baker had over time, supported us well with work. We had produced for them a number of quality related items including a plurality of strain gauge devices with microprocessor controllers which I had designed. These were used to verify the strength of the webbing which keeps a pilot in his seat during an ejection. Initially when these were supplied, I was asked to come up to the factory near Gerrards Cross, as the company claimed an inaccuracy. Most surprised at this (they had been calibrated against National Physical Laboratory sources), I turned up only to discover a fundamental flaw in their earlier testing methods. A long silence ensued when I demonstrated that their original equipment had not been testing the webbing to the required strength!
Later we were asked to design, manufacture and produce the electronics for a device known as the Life Jacket Initiator. This was for the R.A.F. and intended to automatically inflate the pilot's life jacket on ejection into water. This device was most successful and is still in service with the R.A.F. at the time of writing, more than 20 years later. I was most surprised when on a radio club visit to RAF Valley to be shown pilot's kit with one of the devices connected. "Is the initiator reliable?" I asked. "Very reliable" was the reply "why?" "Er, well I was responsible for the design of the electronics" I replied to the surprise of the Flight Sergeant.

As I mentioned, Eastpoint were responsible for the whole production cycle of this device, and like all aircraft equipment, it had to be tested and signed off at various stages. Given that this was equipment upon which lives depended, I was to say the least, rather taken aback when asked once by Alex, to skip the tests at one stage and just apply my stamp, as there was a bit of a late delivery. After I had recovered from the shock of such a suggestion, I flatly refused. That night I had a rather nasty dream about ending up in court and trying to explain to the judge why an accident had occurred. I am certainly no saint and quite prepared to take a gamble or two, but the thought of skipping essential testing on life-saving equipment was quite beyond the pale.

Martin-Baker was a truly great company to deal with, redolent of the British aircraft industry of the late 30's. It came as no surprise to me when after the Eastpoint collapse, their quality manager expressed regret at the demise of Eastpoint, saying that John Martin would have certainly kept the company going. This though, would never have met with the satisfaction of Alex – for him it was autonomy or nothing.

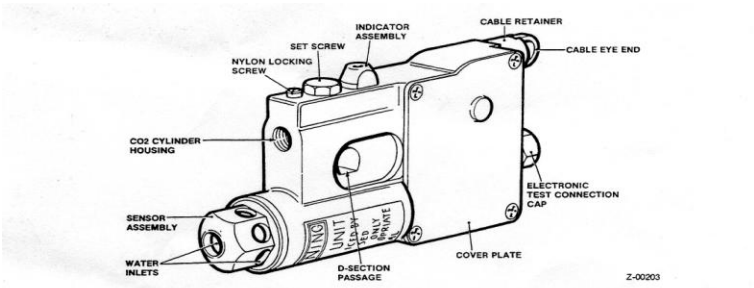


Fig.1 The automatic life preserver inflation unit - general view

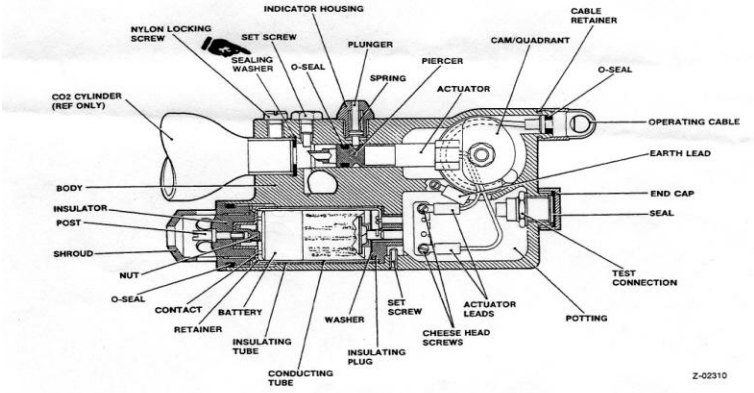


Fig.2 The automatic life preserver inflation unit - sectioned view (Amended illustration)

The other interests I referred to previously concerned my Council activity. I had become good friends with a Mr. Philip Duffy who had recently been elected to the County Council having already served some time at District level. Although from a rival political party, Phil encouraged me to stand for District as a Conservative "also" he said, "you might as well stand for Parish as well, since you will need to attend and might as well have a voice". Very good advice.

I was already a member of the Conservative association and mentioned to them my surprise that no Conservative candidate was being put up for the coming elections. It transpired that they were supporting a Mr. John Parsons, a truly excellent chap, but who refused to stand as a political candidate. Not too pleased about this, I stood against him as an independent and lost, but did get straight in to the Parish Council.
The year learning the ropes at Parish level was not wasted and the following year Harry Carter (LibDem) was up for re-election and I stood against him this time as a Conservative and won the seat.

Taking part in a District or County Council can be very time consuming and requires attendance to various meetings on various days. (At that time the planning committee alone, met for an entire day each month) and my absence from Eastpoint was a further source of friction. Being very fed up with the way the machine inspection project had been handled plus the insistence that I should give up Council work led me to resign, having first secured a job as a software engineer with GPT (Formerly GEC-Plessey Telecommunications).

I had listed myself with a local agency specialising in placements for the electronics industry. I had a few tentative possibilities through this, but nothing was firmed up. I was surprised to

receive a telephone call from an old friend, Graham Fenner whom I had known since his student days due to a mutual interest in radio. He had had sight of my C.V. via one route or another and wanted to know if I was interested in working for GPT. I was not aware prior to this, that the GEC/Plessey arrangement had resulted in a separate company, now known as GPT but still retaining some links with the parent companies.

Well, yes I was interested and an interview was arranged. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that I would be given two interviews – one to work as a hardware engineer, the other for software work. Assuming that I passed both, I could then choose which route to take. Well I DID pass both and had to make the choice. Although I had by now achieved considerable skill in writing programmes, most of my prior experience lay in the hardware design field and on the one hand I was a little apprehensive of taking on a full software role, but on the other hand hardware design had in recent years moved towards computer simulation of circuitry which took the fun out of it from my perspective. I plumped for the software route which in the long run turned out to be the best choice, although the road to perfection turned out to be paved with a few obstacles!

I must pause here to recall that I had kept in touch with Graham since we first met and by coincidence we managed to meet in Brisbane, since Graham was en-route to the U.K. having completed a period of work on telecommunications at Port Moresby. Graham stayed for a couple of days and of course one evening involved a trip into the pub at Beaudesert where we both became slightly the worse for wear – I think my condition was the worse, as Graham drove the Landrover back. The next morning I took him on a somewhat restrained tour of some of the broadcasting studios in Brisbane, where my hangover was noted. Later, I was to see him off at the international airport. After I left GPT/Marconi, we met again a few times at reunions of the old Swanage & Isle of Purbeck radio club, held at the Square & Compass, Worth Matravers. Sadly, Graham did not make too many of these meetings. He died at an early age, of cancer – an illness which he had very successfully hidden from us all, for some years. Ironically, a phone call was received in the middle of one reunion, to inform us of his death. At least we could all raise a glass to him.

Anyway, to return to GPT - I was in at the deep end. They gave me charge of a team who all knew a lot more about software design than I did. The project was an experimental one, we had to evaluate new design tools, and learn new techniques. A factor of which I was unaware of at the time, was that all of the guys in the team had a bit of 'history' in that they were all a bit difficult to place in the other projects within GPT. Our systems were to be based upon Unix and the 'C' language, neither of which had I encountered. It was an uphill struggle for all and the project dragged on and was ultimately finished by another group.

During my time at GPT, sadly my mother died only to be followed a year later, by Vic., my stepfather. Both funerals were held in the Parish church at Corfe and they are buried in the same grave in 'God's acre' off West Street in Corfe.

By this time, I had become proficient in what I needed to know and went on to head up configuration control for another project – this time with great success. Later I went on to a job which I really enjoyed – system administration. This work confers god-like status upon the selected few. One has control of all aspects of the machines and their networks. I actually started to enjoy going to work!
The company had up until now, been resident at the site in Soper's Lane in Poole. This was a legacy from the old Plessey days, and we shared the buildings with Plessey. This worked reasonably well, but the facilities were a bit crude and the company invested in a custom-fitted factory called Discovery Court (some called it Dillbert Court) off the Wallisdown road on the way to Bournemouth. The new facilities were excellent and efficient, although I had enjoyed the atmosphere of Soper's Lane, as the factory was originally an ordnance plant for producing aircraft guns and still had a few interesting artefacts of the period remaining.

While with Eastpoint at Corfe Castle, I had renewed my interest from many years past, in the Cordite factory at Holton Heath. Sadly most of this site had been demolished or re-developed although quite a large chunk had remained with the M.O.D. as a research establishment. I started to visit the site which intrigued me more and more. There were still quite a few interesting buildings left and from inspection one could only guess at the processes for which they were designed. I decided to do some research and in the course of this, met a certain Malcolm Bowditch who worked on the defence research site and had written an account of the history. I obtained a copy of this which had only been released through the Ministry's internal publications. It was an excellent account, but I thought it could do with additional material and more importantly – be properly published, as I was aware that there was a good deal of public interest in the site. Many families in Dorset had a connection to the factory.
I suggested to Malcolm that I add some material and further pictures to the work he had already done and that it be published for sale, to which he readily agreed. I had to stump up the cash for the publication, but need not have worried as the book was well received and sold out returning a profit as time went by.
Early in 2014, Malcolm & I decided that after many requests for a reprint, it might be worth our publishing a second (and updated) edition. To my delight, Nick & Vicky McCamley who had in recent years, built up a very successful publishing business agreed to publish it. Work is now finished on this. The hardest part was sorting all of the many pictures. We had of course retained them, but not thinking of any future use they had been stored in a rather haphazard fashion!
To this day, even after countless trips to explore the site I never tire of the place. It has a wonderful atmosphere and as a large part of it is now a nature reserve, is also a place of peace and quiet.

While working for GPT (Which by then had become Marconi's), a member of staff left to work for the Ministry of Defence. I was most interested in this and mentioned that should he ever find a slot for a systems administrator, would he be kind enough to let me know?

I never really expected to hear any more from Duncan who was now working for the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (MOD), but about eighteen months on, I received a surprise call from him to ask if I was still interested, and if so would I supply a CV and attend an interview. I told him I would be delighted to do so, and thanked him for remembering me. I will return to this in the next chapter, but first must mention something which during this period I had found most interesting and diverting – this being the exploration of underground bunkers!

Adrian had come back from a scout trip and mentioned that they had visited an enormous underground establishment near Bath – he was clearly very impressed and from his description, so was I. Enquiries revealed this to be Monkton Farleigh mine – a former Army ammunition store which had served well during World War 2. This was currently established as a museum and I duly arranged a trip for the family. I was very impressed. Miles of tunnels and storage areas, ventilation plant, offices and even toilet blocks and showers – all underground.
I was to return with Adrian many times to explore this as sadly the chaps running the excellent museum were required to vacate it, but by this time I had met the instigator of the museum, Nick McCamley, whom I instantly recognised as a kindred spirit and we became firm friends to this day. Nick went on to write a series of books on WW2 history[7] – particularly those items having an underground connection. Nick, Adrian and I went on to investigate many other sites of interest around Britain.
Adrian also used to go exploring with a group of his friends, frequently sleeping overnight underground! This occasioned a bit of panic on one occasion when Adrian and a friend had gone off to an undisclosed quarry. This later turned out to be Ridge Park. An elderly local resident knew that cavers frequently visited the quarry and he was rather concerned to note that their car was still in the same place next morning. As a result he contacted the police, in case they had become trapped. The result was complete overkill. A helicopter was scrambled – although exactly how this would help find someone underground is unclear. Multiple police

cars and officers were involved although strangely none were 'authorised' to take a trip underground. Having been made aware of what was going on, I contacted Nick McCamley who descended the slope shaft at Ridge, to find Adrian and friend comfortably making morning tea at the bottom!
The inspector in charge telephoned later to say that all was well. "I suppose you shouted at them?" I asked. "Er, they were *advised*, sir" was the reply.

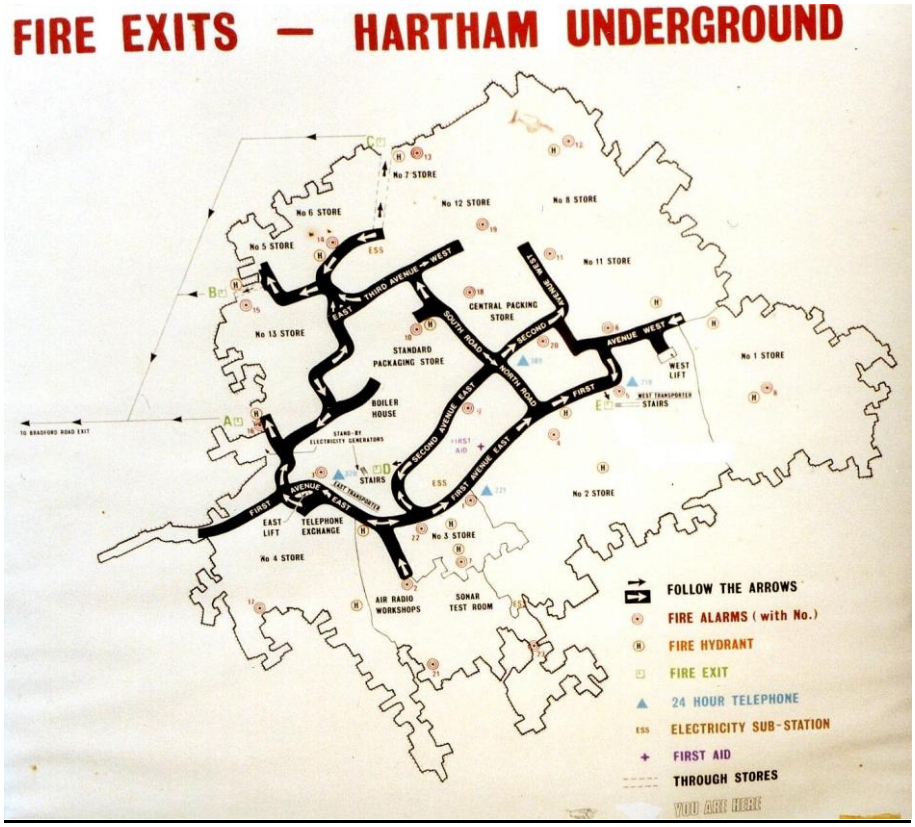
I must admit to not having safety in mind at all times. On one occasion a group of us had decided to explore Ridge Quarry. We had called in on Nick and made him aware of our destination. Having looked at Ridge, we decided upon lunch at the Quarryman's Arms and discovered that they were selling some rather good maps of Box quarry. Box is huge and a place where one is guaranteed to get a bit lost, so it was rather silly of us to decide just to 'nip in' and check some detail on the map. As usual we got lost and the torches were starting to dim! I recall not being alarmed at getting lost, but more of the embarrassment which would be caused if we were holed up in the dark, having specifically stated that we would be exploring an entirely different quarry! Fortunately we did get out before the torches finally expired, but it was a salutary lesson.

Tight squeeze!

One of the maze of passages in Monkton Farleigh mine.

Adrian, Bradley, Nick and myself on a visit to Monkton Farleigh.

Adrian inspects an abandoned underground power plant.



Chapter 10 –I become a Civil Servant again.

I duly attended an interview at Winfrith. It was interesting to note how the place had changed since my initial employment on the site back in the sixties. Gone were the hordes of scurrying figures in white coats and the heavy amount of site transport. Most of the original buildings still stood, but now either awaiting de-commission or housing new tenants. Some of the buildings had received new and in some cases rather fanciful names. I was once directed to the 'Casterbridge Centre'. On being shown it's location on a site plan, I recognised this as the canteen!

My interview took place in what used to be the offices for one of the experimental reactor halls. Oddly enough, next door to the block where I had received my first interview back in the early sixties. Having got past security I was shown into an office and confronted with Richard Haynes (who was to become my manager), a personnel chap from DERA[8] and a senior civil servant. The board was easy enough, I knew the required technical stuff, but was somewhat taken aback when the senior chap started to quiz me about fly-by-wire and battlefield operations. Fortunately I was interested in the subject, so could at least hold a reasonable conversation on the topics.
I was later informed that I had passed the interview and had to sit tight while security clearance was obtained. "We'll call you".

Well, time passed and I was becoming a bit anxious as to what was happening, so I called Richard. He was quite angry. He said there had been some security 'difficulty' and the security service had not bothered to progress the matter. He assured me that he had advised them as to an appropriate course of action.

Richard was as good as his word, as a few days later I received a call from a gentleman from the MOD who said that he had received my file with the words "for urgent action" on the cover and could he please make an appointment to come and see me? I was of course delighted to receive him and with some cheek, booked a room at Marconi's for the chat. He duly arrived – a most pleasant chap and we got down to the usual questioning about security clearance. I enquired as to what the problem had been, given that I had previous clearance. "Well" he said, "On your application form you stated that you had since acquired dual nationality as an Australian." To this I expressed surprise that this had been an issue, given that Australia was not exactly unfriendly! He took the point, but went on to explain that my clearance was also required to NATO standard and Australia, for obvious geographical reasons, was not a member!

I must have satisfied the security services, as I was shortly cleared and given a start date at Winfrith. Although delighted with the result, I felt a bit guilty at leaving my colleagues at Marconi's. As it happened, a memo came around enquiring if members of staff would consider early retirement and I thought this might be worth raising with my manager. His reply was "No Les, you are not included in this as you are needed by the department." This put me in a bit of an awkward spot and I confessed: "Actually Simon, I have been offered a job with the MOD. It is something I have been after for a while."

"OK – understood" said Simon. "Leave it with me and I will see what can be done". He was not at all bitter about my leaving.

I was rather pleased when a short while later, I was called over to meet a chap from Edge Lane (Our Liverpool site) who was quite senior in the I.T.[9] dept. He pointed out that although I did not qualify for the early retirement scheme, he handed me a note which set out an 'offer' and wanted to know what I thought about it. On reading it I discovered that they proposed to give me £12,000! I had expected nothing.

As a result, I 'blew' a fair amount of cash by hiring a train from Swanage Railway upon which we had a bar and catering and my leaving 'do' was spent in good company chuffing up and down the line between Swanage and Norden. There were a few sore heads the following day!

I had to attend the usual 'send off' in the office the following day – speeches all round. The guys and dolls from my department had obviously given some thought to my leaving present. I should explain that I had always been known as a bit of a grump when having to work on Microsoft machines, as I considered their system grossly inferior to my lovely Unix systems. I was also known to be a hater of mobile phones – so, they gave me a mobile phone, a decent cigar and a framed certificate (allegedly signed by Bill Gates), stating that I was a "Top Microsoft Guru"!
The phone actually turned out to be most useful and I still have it at the time of writing. It still works well despite some wear and tear and I intend to hold on to it as long as possible as it is large enough for me to be able to read the keys!

My first few days with DERA consisted of the usual introductory stuff. I was issued with a pass and informed about the security requirements. Sadly most of my work was to be on the dreaded Microsoft Clockwork Novelties, but there was also some interesting Unix work to be done. I took to walking around the site during lunch break and trying to recall what all the buildings were for. I discovered that we now had a store in what used to be the apprentice school building. Not being one to recall building numbers, I would always refer to this as the apprentice school, to the confusion of my colleagues. My old works, the instrument workshop (B47) was I learned, now empty. The UKAEA still owned the site and had a large presence, but the staff numbers were now drastically reduced and most of the nuclear-based work consisted of de-commissioning the various reactors and buildings.

One day Richard called me in to see if I could help out at a site known as Portsdown West, with some Unix administration and as a result he took me to the site, suggesting that I remember the route. Ports. West as it was known is situated on the top of Portsdown Hill (Portsmouth) and commands fine views over the harbour and city.
I was to spend a couple of days a week at Portsdown, assisting with the administration of a secret laboratory associated with sea systems. The laboratory was certainly secure. Not only was it within the fence and main building, it was protected with a huge steel door and contained its own intruder alarm and fire extinguishing system. Being now working on the wondrous Flexi-time system, I could choose my hours of work and so I would get in the lab. at around 7-7.30 a.m. This meant that I could miss the worst of the morning traffic and also leave mid-afternoon. Another advantage was that I could take down systems for maintenance without interrupting the work of others.
On the minus side, it would often mean being almost the first on site on a dark winter's morning. The first call would be to the police gate to register the car (It was always a hire car and the police needed to be able to account for all on site).
The next step would be to enter the building and find my way to the lab through dark corridors. I then had to try and wake up sufficiently to select the right numbers on the door combination lock (A fiddly job even in broad daylight), get in and quickly de-activate the alarm system and the extinguisher system. Once all this was done, subsequent entry could be achieved by swiping one's badge.

Back at base, I had a small office which became a bit smaller as I was later asked to maintain the registry of secret files pertaining to a project in the adjacent lab. Yet more combination lock codes to remember!
For those who think that browsing through secret files might be interesting, they would in most cases be disappointed. Most secret stuff of a scientific nature is a very boring read, unless you are either fascinated with the subject at hand, or happen to be an enemy agent seeking for example, noise tests on a particular submarine. The greatest kick I got from the job was that I often found reasons to visit mysterious places which as an ordinary member of the public, would not normally be possible. I was delighted to call in to Malvern for example as I had been aware of the work they did during WW2 on radar.

On my first visit to Malvern, I suddenly recalled that an old friend of mine had gone to work there when it was known as the Royal Radar Establishment. His name was Dr. Roger Moore. I asked my colleagues if they had heard of him. They replied in the negative and suggested I check the internal phone directory. There was a Professor R.K. Moore listed. I rang the number.
"Are you by any chance the same R.Moore who used to attend the Square & Compass pub with us in the 70's?" I enquired. "Yes Les" came the reply, so off I went to his office.
It was great to catch up with Roger again and we remain in touch. After I took my leave he directed me to a 'quicker' way back. I of course, got lost; I eventually had to ask someone the way out. I had clearly ended up in a 'sensitive' area, as the chap I asked took a long look at my pass and asked a few questions!

One site I had never previously visited was Porton Down. This place had quite a sinister reputation, being a place where chemical and biological research takes place, so I was delighted when I found an excuse to call in and set up some software on a computer there.

Having completed my work, I enquired as to whether there was any work currently being undertaken on a lift. The reason for this request was that a friend (Nick McCamley's son Alistair) worked for Otis, the lift people and I wondered if they were still on site. The chap replied "I think there is a new lift in that building over there, but have a care, that is where they keep all the nasty stuff". "Surely if I went into the wrong area someone would shout Oi?" I replied "Oh no." he said. I decided not to bother.

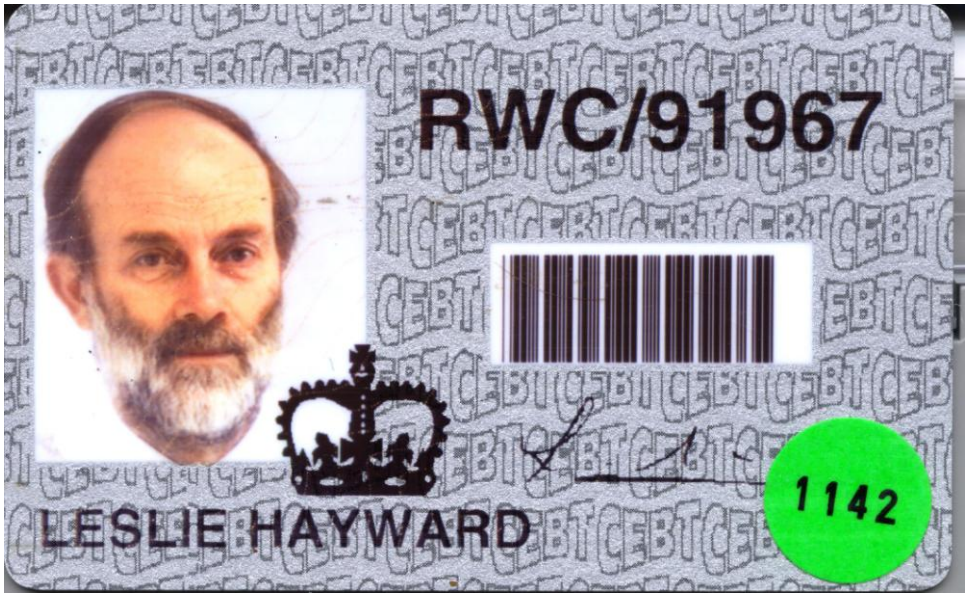
One large job I was asked to do was very enjoyable, given that it permitted me to do a great deal of poking around in interesting buildings. I was asked to undertake a complete survey of the I.T. facilities for a DERA group known as CHS[10] who were based at Farnborough. I realised that this was a big job which would take me a week, even with some additional staff whom I roped in. Not only was Farnborough on the list, there were other various sites around the Portsmouth area plus Fort Halstead in Kent, where CHS had a presence.
Farnborough has a long and distinguished history of Britain's main site for aircraft investigation and research, although at the time of my visit a good deal of the site's facilities were being run down and the reason CHS required the survey was in order to compose requirements for their forthcoming move to a brand new site near Pyestock.

I booked in to a nearby hotel for the week and sorted out which areas would be covered by the various team members. Our objective was to record all bits of I.T. kit in use and the software. Whilst most of this was routine, I used the opportunity to have a look around many buildings some of which clearly were not in use – but who knows, there MIGHT have been a computer lurking around. I found all sorts of deserted labs. and workshops. One impressive building was a huge hangar. I was intrigued by the fact that the ceiling was festooned with many hundreds of high power infra-red lamps. I later found out that this was used to simulate high temperatures when testing tanks! Other interesting places were the centrifuge and barometric chambers.
On a lunch break, two of us decided to take a snoop around part of the site which had been disused for some years. It was a cold and very windy day, so we were well covered with hats and coats. We must have looked a bit suspicious, as a security chap came up as we were peering into windows and asked to see our passes!

Having completed my work at Farnborough, I had occasion to visit Fort Halstead, where CHS had a small presence. I missed the turn off the M25 and found myself deep in rural Kent. I asked a villager if they knew where the fort was. They directed me to a hill about a mile away. Reaching the top I saw the DERA sign and gaily drove in to the gate brandishing my pass. A couple of rather puzzled security guards came up and enquired as to why I required access. I explained my mission. The problem was that I had come to a range access at the rear of the site. "The main gate" they explained, "is just down the hill on the left".
I was most impressed with Fort Halstead, a very interesting place around which I had a walk in the lunch break.

At the time of writing, the site has recently been sold by QinetiQ (more of which later) and is sadly likely to become yet another housing estate. The fort was Britain's premier site for explosives research and testing including forensic work. We have lost so much of our defence research capability; this was just another nail in the coffin.

Not long after I had completed my report on CHS, we received confirmation of a bad business which had threatened DERA for some years. The Blair government had amongst other devices designed to wreck Britain, decided to privatise DERA. Some of DERA would remain under government control as DSTL[11] the rest would be in the private sector under the company name of QINETIQ. SEC[12] (The division in which I worked), would become part of the privatised sector.
I was not at all pleased by this development. This job had been the most interesting post I had ever held, but already, even before the deed was done, departments were contracting and reducing activity. What had regularly taken me out on interesting projects had developed into a rather boring desk job almost overnight. I decided that I would get out while I still had the crown on my badge. I decided to investigate early retirement at the age of 59.



An unauthorised picture of my MOD pass.

Sadly during my time with the M.O.D., the Marconi Company started to fail. This was in very large part due to the major software customer (British Telecom) deciding to place their contracts overseas. The fact that B.T. and its predecessor the British Post Office had worked in partnership over many years with GEC/Plessey/GPT/Marconi and had between them developed the famous System X exchange seemed to have little bearing on the drive to get the cheapest possible option with complete disregard for employment in Britain.

I called in to see my old colleagues at Discovery Court about a year before closure. It was a case of deja-vu. The situation was reminiscent of the earlier time when I as a System Administrator, along with other chaps from computer services, formed a small team busily installing systems and networks. Well, the same team was there. This time though, their job was to strip everything out – the majority of the workforce had already left, having been made redundant.

Chapter 11 – A big move.

Whilst idling the time away during the run up to DERA privatisation, I had been surfing the Net for property. There existed at the time, what was referred to as the "North-South" divide. This was the fact that whereas house and property prices in the South had shot up in recent years, those in the North had remained at a lower level. I was interested to see if we could buy a rural smallholding somewhere and still have some change left on selling 115 East St. Corfe. Retirement in Dorset was out of the question. We could not afford to stay in the Corfe Castle house as pensioners and a smallholding of any sort would cost around £1,000,000!

It would mean a serious move of course, and leaving our friends in the village. There was also the little matter that I was still the Chairman of the Parish Council and Chairman of the District Planning committee. To be honest, I was getting a bit fed up with the District Council I had always enjoyed the planning aspects, but the Council had foolishly adopted the 'cabinet' style of working (another invention of that silly Mr. Blair) and a lot of the enjoyment had gone from the work. In addition, the Conservative party had begun its slide to the left – from which it still belongs at the time of writing. Things were indeed a little different since the time some 13 years previously when a group of us newly-elected types joined the Purbeck District Council in a spirit of optimism. I can not leave this subject without mentioning the fact that we had some good laughs as well as the serious stuff. On our first day, we were shown around the departments and introduced to the officers. As we were about to meet the Chief Planning officer, a couple of the female candidates got the giggles. This was due to the fact that a male candidate was seen to be possession of a rather effeminate purse. When you get the giggles, there is nothing that can be done but to allow time for the effects to wear off, and so it was that I found myself keeping the officers talking while keeping a watch down the corridor to see if the ladies were yet in a fit state to make an entrance!

I was not dismayed therefore, at the prospect of leaving the District Council. I was not so happy about leaving the Parish. We worked as a good team and I loved the history of Corfe. The Council had links stretching back to the time when the castle was intact and Corfe returned two members of parliament. There were former Chairmen of the Parish who were Haywards, but whether or not they were related, I have no idea. The name Hayward is incidentally an occupational name like Smith or Fletcher, as it means literally "A warden of the hay". The Parish still employed a Hayward to look after the grazing and gathering rights on the common. One thing I would be very sad to leave behind, was a band with which I had been playing. This was a Country & Western band called Rambling Fever and we were enjoying some very good engagements. I had to reluctantly leave this behind and hoped that I might find some work in the new location. Sadly as it turned out, there is very little these days in terms of live music in the Anglesey area, so the bass guitar has gathered dust since, although from time to time I am called on to repair a variety of guitar amplifiers.

I had grown much attached to 115 East Street, which was a very comfortable and attractive house, but sadly we could not take it with us. Foolishly I put it on the market via an estate agent. We sold the place within 24 hours, to the local G.P. who had recently moved to the area. I could have kicked myself, as I knew his situation and a phone call would have saved quite a bit of cash in terms of the extortionate fees which agents charge. Anyway, the deed was done and in the meantime we had been visiting a number of promising properties in North Wales and Anglesey. We were almost spoilt for choice and rejected one property simply because it had too much land attached. Another was almost right, but the stairs and top bedrooms would not have accommodated our furniture. Finally we visited a property which was under offer at the time with another party. It turned out to be just what we wanted. Around four acres, a decent farmhouse with plenty of useful outbuildings plus what was effectively another house. This was built as a self-contained annex for a disabled member of the family back in the 70's. (This we later let as holiday accommodation). We all agreed prices and the sale of the Corfe house went ahead in excellent synchronisation with the

acquisition of the property on the Isle of Anglesey. Its name is Cefn Gribyn, which translates as 'Back of the gorsey ridge'.

On a rather chilly February a large removal truck with our effects on board was met at the property and stuff was unloaded. The place had not been lived in for some time and needed quite a bit of work. It was cold and damp and the central heating took quite a bit of time to master the situation. Over the coming years, I was to do a good deal of work, including re-slating of roofs, re-decorating and re-flooring. There was also a considerable amount of fencing to do as by then

Cefn Gribyn – February 2001.

We had been presented with a pet lamb which quickly grew into a rather large sheep.

Megan.

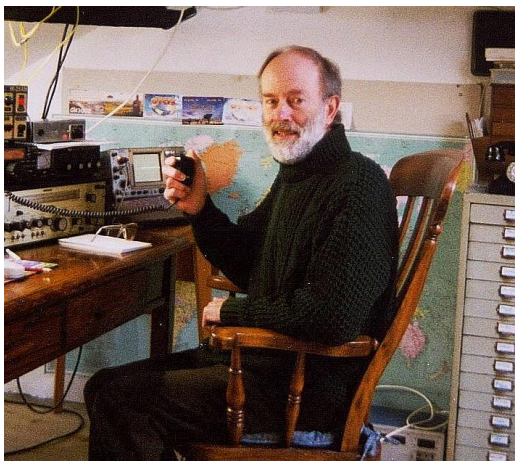
We wanted to get a vegetable garden going as quickly as possible and so the question arose as to where it should go. There was a suitable area at the rear of the house so out I went and drove in the spade – merely to be met with a loud clang. I had chosen an area where the rock vein was only a few inches beneath the soil! Eventually a more suitable spot was chosen and I later enclosed the vegetable garden with a dry stone wall to mitigate the effects of the strong prevailing wind for which Anglesey is famous. Later we added a greenhouse and a poly-tunnel and created a large additional garden in a part of our larger field. There was an existing little walled flower garden which was one of the features which attracted me to the property. This is an excellent and peaceful place in which to sit with a cool beer on a warm clear day, whilst watching the ferries enter and depart the port of Holyhead, some ten miles distant. As I write this passage, it is a cold January, but the day has been sunny with no wind

and I have started to dig the vegetable plots for this year's sowing. The soil on Anglesey is a light sandy loam, ideal for gardening in any weather, and well fertile.

We had not been in residence for more than a few days when the phone rang. It turned out to be a chap with whom I had various email contacts in the past, regarding radio. He had kindly tracked me down and telephoned to welcome us to the island. He also invited me along to the Dragon Radio club to which I have been a member since.

I mentioned earlier that I had done a bit of radio 'pirating' back in the late 50's. Despite having worked continuously in the electronics industry from the age of 15, I had never got around to obtaining an amateur radio licence. The chaps at the club pointed out that as I was now retired, I might as well go for it, which I did. The theory was not a problem, but I did have to mug up on the rules and regulations. I found myself in the curious position of being a lecturer and student at the same time and in the same class, for while on the one hand I was being taught the regulations, I was teaching others about radio theory! I continue to teach prospective licensees. A group who I was teaching for the final exam was surprised to learn that I played the bass guitar. It transpired that two members of the group also played instruments and it was jokingly suggested that we might start up an amateur radio band. Going along with this, I suggested that a good name for the band might be 'The QRM'. It should be noted that QRM is the code for 'interference from other stations'!

I mentioned earlier that some roofs required re-slating. The biggest job in this respect was the larger of the two barns. Now this had at one time included a hay loft which had I was informed, rotted and been removed some time in the 1930's. You could still see the holes in the wall where the joists had fitted, but the most worrying feature was the fact that the other end of the loft had rested upon a stone wall. This had also been removed and the purlins now rested upon a rather shaky principal rafter which had been erected as an alternative. As a result, there was a bit of a sag in the roof.
Whilst I had the old slates off, I decided to restore the floor and re-build the dividing wall, whilst jacking up the purlins a few inches. Having got the hay loft restored, I suddenly realised that the room which resulted would make a marvellous radio 'shack' if suitably insulated and plastered. This work was quickly done!



I had for some time been a little puzzled about a concrete plinth in the centre of the farm yard which included a steel cover and intended to check this out later, thinking it might be a drain of some sort. In conversation with Medwen, one of our neighbours who used to live at Cefn Gribyn, I mentioned this and was told that it was in fact a well. This was marvellous news. When I took off the cover, I was impressed. The well was huge, being about nine feet in diameter. We were drawing mains water at the time from a local farmer's mains which of course meant that we were beholden to him both for consistency of supply and payment. I investigated the

The 'shack' just after completion.

Possibility of using the well as our supply and later installed a pump and filters. This now provides almost all of our water. I retained the farmer's connection with a meter for emergency use in very dry weather. I had investigated with Welsh Water, the cost of having our own connection to the mains in the village. A quote arrived later for around £1000.00.

This did not seem too bad, considering the distance the pipe would have to travel along some fields, but closer enquiry revealed that the quote was simply to take the pipe under the road – the rest would be at my expense! I politely declined the offer.
Medwen's son Armon, was at the time of our arrival, farming sheep and cattle from the nearby farm, Tan Rallt. Sadly he gave this up due to the foot and mouth disease which arrived in Anglesey shortly after we moved and also as a result of an enthusiasm for alcohol. It was Armon who presented us with our pet lamb. Armon is in his sober moments, is quite a helpful chap and he arranged for me to collect a dying tree from another farmer on the island, for firewood. This tree turned out to be a huge ash, around 200 years old and of considerable girth. After spending the best part of a morning with two of us using chain saws, the tree refused to fall. "No problem" said Armon, "I will just attach a rope to a branch and we can pull it over with the tractor. As he was about to do this, the tree decided that it was time after all, to come down. I have rarely seen anyone run quite as fast as Armon did! Fortunately, he escaped unscathed and the tree provided a huge amount of firewood.
Steve, the farmer who had given me the tree was quite a sharp character who did not miss much. He was on one occasion though, 'had' by Armon. They were walking through the field at the back of Cefn Gribyn when Steve pointed to my recently erected aerial tower and asked "What the dickens is that?" Armon quickly replied that Mr. Hayward was a clever chap with the wireless and had managed to contact the failed Beagle lander space project! Steve it seems swallowed this, hook, line and sinker.

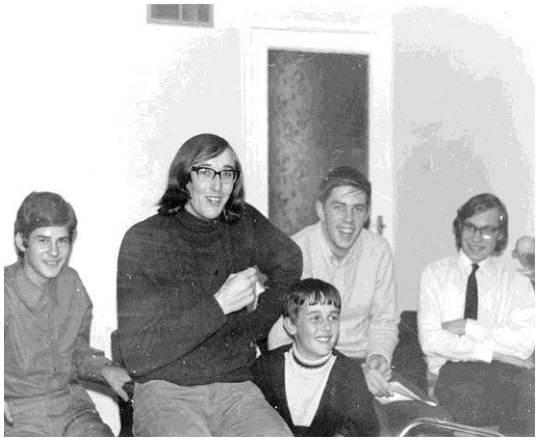
Being of the 'idle' retired, we now had to get used to managing on a restricted income. Before we decided on this major move, I had of course done a few sums and calculated that we could exist reasonably well on the interest that would accrue from the balance of the house sales which was now in a building society. Shortly after we moved in, Dear old Gordon Brown, then in charge of the countries finances made a change to the banking system which meant that interest rates and thus our income was severely depleted. I was not drawing the state pension at the time. To make matters worse, the local authority had jacked up the council tax band to 'F' and were after yet more money as a result of the fact that we were using the annex for holiday rentals. On this occasion they were instrumental in fouling their own nest, as a lovely young lady from the valuation office came around and promptly said "We will put the annex on business rates which will be cheaper, and I will reduce the band on the house from 'F' to 'C'. She was from Liverpool – another reason to reinforce my liking of Scousers!
The holiday rentals were always a bit problematic – it is a job to get holiday visitors to the island, even with extensive advertising, unlike Corfe Castle, where all you need to do is put up a sign and ask the punters to form a queue! Our first customer was my former security officer from Winfrith, who had kept an eye on our plans post-retirement. This nearly resulted in disaster. We had work carried out on the flat roof over the annex, as leaks had occurred where the roof met the wall of the farmhouse. (Mushrooms were sprouting from one of the bedroom walls when we first moved in!) Anyway, we had re-decorated and thought all to be well. Sadly though, our guests had chosen a bad weather period. Although the first day was sunny, the rest of the week gave persistent rain, and this revealed the fact that the roof work was none to good! Fortunately good humour prevailed. After several further attempts by the 'professionals' to fix the roof, as so often happens, a satisfactory result was only achieved when I did the job myself.

After we moved to Cefn Gribyn, Susan and her husband Billy produced two grandchildren: Sam and Toby. The once holiday cottage then provided a handy stop-over for friends and family.

Sam and Toby examine the chimney of their house at Hambledon.

I return from time to time to Dorset in order to catch up with friends and family. Thankfully the village of Corfe maintains its character, as does Swanage – surprisingly so, given the number of lovely old Victorian houses which have been torn down simply to put up blocks of flats. A great deal of Wareham has been rebuilt, but the character of the town remains. Studland remains a very pretty place, although only around ten percent of the housing has a permanent occupation. The rest is holiday accommodation or second homes for wealthy folk. The less well protected areas of Dorset suffer from the hands of developers. Each year more fields are built over and more traffic annoyance measures such as speed limits and new roundabouts are introduced. Anglesey does not escape this of course, but thankfully it is not a prime target for inward migration and thus does not suffer to the same extent.

I mentioned in previous chapters, Graham Fenner, Roger Moore and 'Spenney'. I will now add the names of John Linford, Dave Harris Keith Dunford, Keith and Yolanda Yates. These folk including myself were all members of a very informal club which we named 'The Swanage & Isle of Purbeck Radio club'. Whilst a good deal of our activity included evening drinking sessions at the Square & Compass inn, we did also take part in radio – oriented activity! The odd thing was that almost at the same time, some of us departed to other places world-wide. John went to the USA, Dave to Africa, Graham to New Guinea, I to Australia. This was more or less the end of the club in its original form and venue. As a coincidence, everyone has now returned to the UK and we have been able to organise a few re-unions in the Square and Compass!



An early picture of some of the members of the Swanage & Isle of Purbeck radio club.

Front: Roger Moore, Back Centre Ian Dowse, Back Right, John Linford.

A re-union of the Swanage & Isle of Purbeck radio club at the Square & Compass, Worth Matravers.

At left (front to back): Yo. Yates, Roger (now professor) Moore, myself.
At Right (front to back): Keith Dunford, John Linford, Dave Harris.
The lady in the red jumper is Graham Fenner's wife, Kris. Sadly, Graham had died the previous year.

In 2010 we decided that we had had enough of the holiday rental business. A great deal of work was required for a reasonable return, and we were both finding the intensive work required when clearing up after one group in the morning – in good time for the next booking to arrive, a bit exhausting. An upshot of this was quite positive. Since Anne was now having difficulty with walking, I suggested that it might be prudent for her to eventually sleep downstairs. Since we no longer enjoyed the business rate on the annex, a nasty bit of legislation which had recently been brought in applied to it. This meant that the annex would now be subject to Council tax as a *separate* property – thus we would have to find TWO lots of Council tax! Needless to say I was not at all happy about this and some research showed that there was an exemption (class W) in force which made an annex if used for an elderly relation, to be tax free. Needless to say, this clause is not widely advertised, especially by the revenue departments of local authorities. It took a good many stiff letters from me concluding with a threat to bring in the ombudsman, but I eventually won the case, getting a fat rebate and a declaration that the annex is now exempt from tax. Later as I was then the

sole occupant of the main house, I managed to establish (after some heated correspondence) the fact that as the sole occupier, I also qualified for a discount!

Thank you – the Internet and thank you the world of computers, both of which have contributed greatly to my income and well-being.

In 2014, Billy and Susan sold their house in Hambledon after a long wait due to the down-turn in the general economy and the housing market in particular. Although the cottage in Hambledon was very pleasant and within a lovely village, it had a cellar which was prone to flooding from time to time and they had also been looking for somewhere with a bit more room – eventually being able to move to a much better location in West Tisted. The timing could not have been better, given the torrential rains and flooding which had very bad effects on the South of England. Seeing some of the flooding, I was so glad that we had moved in to a house on a hill with solid rock foundations. Sadly Susan & Bill were later to split up, although still on good relations and with both strongly supporting the kids.
Later in 2014, Anne's mobility problems had worsened to the extent that she has difficulty getting into the bath, so the next little project is to fit a walk-in shower instead. *(completed in January 2015)* Cash allowing, it would also be nice to acquire a wheel-chair friendly vehicle as well, since she can no longer get into the car.

Although 'retired', I continue to do work of various kinds, some even pays! One company I have been quite deeply involved with is responsible for explosives ordnance disposal. They have given me quite a few interesting jobs, one being the design of an electric detonator initiator which we had a bit of fun testing, by blowing up some plastic explosive in the back garden. More recently I have been involved in compiling reports and proposals for site bomb clearance – one being just a couple of miles from my old school at Wanstead.

Some items I produced for ordnance disposal:

A gun for de-arming improvised explosive devices.

A magnetometer and control unit for borehole checks.

Burning out explosive from a WW2 shell. The burner is fired from a safe distance by the electric initiator.

In July of 2020, I had a pleasant surprise.

I had earlier written that I had been unable to trace any records of my father's side of the family. This all changed when I received an email from a previously unknown cousin. She (Lynda) had tracked me down by using a family tree web programme to which I had contributed. She was able to provide many more details of my father's side of the family and show that they went back to the Huguenots! She also sent some notes that my father and his brother had compiled in connection with building radio equipment. In return, I was able to forward my father's service records, which I had earlier obtained, thanks to the RAF. Amazing what can be achieved by careful use of the internet!

Susan has now remarried to a nice chap called Barry and at the time of writing (2020), they are living in a converted barn in the wilds of Dorset. Susie continues to work as an ambulance paramedic.

My work in connection with ordnance disposal continues, and although it is not my discipline, they now have me developing thermite applications for burning out shells…

<u>The latest toy for the EOD chaps. This is a logger which stores magnetic data from site surveys and presents a graphical record aligned to GPS co-ordinates.</u>

Chapter 12 – A very sad event.

It is 2021 and March 26th. I am awoken at 1.30 a.m. by the phone. Fearing the worst, I answer it and am told that my lovely little wife Anne, had died. This is the end of a long saga of various illnesses which Anne had to endure, going back some years and starting just after we moved to Wales when she started to suffer from polymyalgia. This did not prevent us from running the holiday let, although some years on she developed a hip condition which gradually made walking go from difficult to impossible. As a result for her last years she was confined to either bed or a wheelchair. I became her carer and cannot speak highly enough of all the services, including the Welsh NHS, which supported us.

The reason for the hospital visit on this last occasion was due to infection in some bad cuts and bruising after a stumble.

Losing someone with whom you have closely lived for very many years is a big shock and as I write this later in April, I am trying to come to terms with my new life.

This year to date has been the worst. Appalling winter weather which stripped the garage roof, My lovely dog died, closely followed by our one remaining cat – and now this.

Anne is to be buried in the graveyard of a lovely little (now disused) church – Llechcynfarwy, a short distance from the house.

I write at the age of 77 years and intend to carry on to the best of my ability – if all fails, perhaps someone would kindly delete the next line…

To be continued……

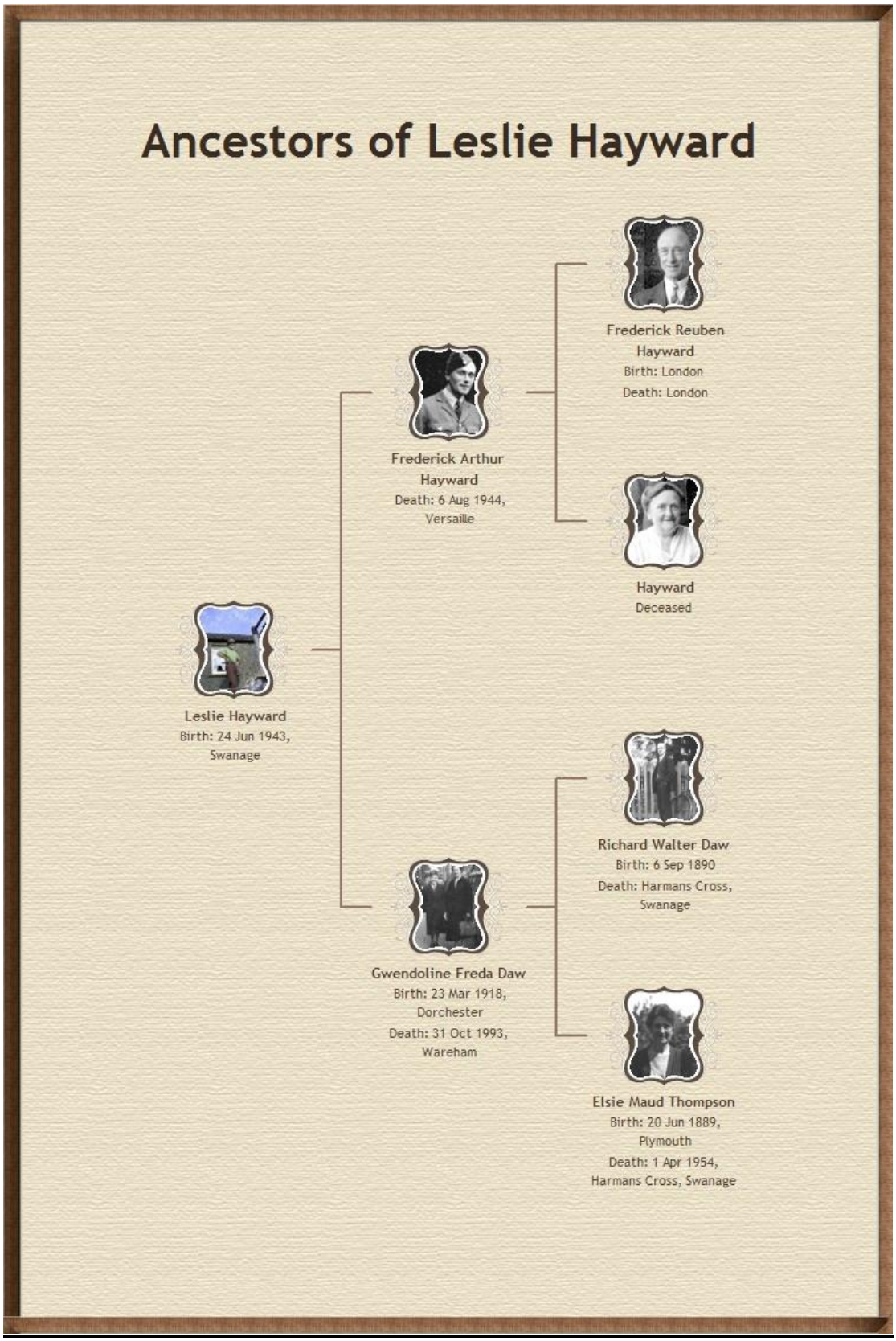
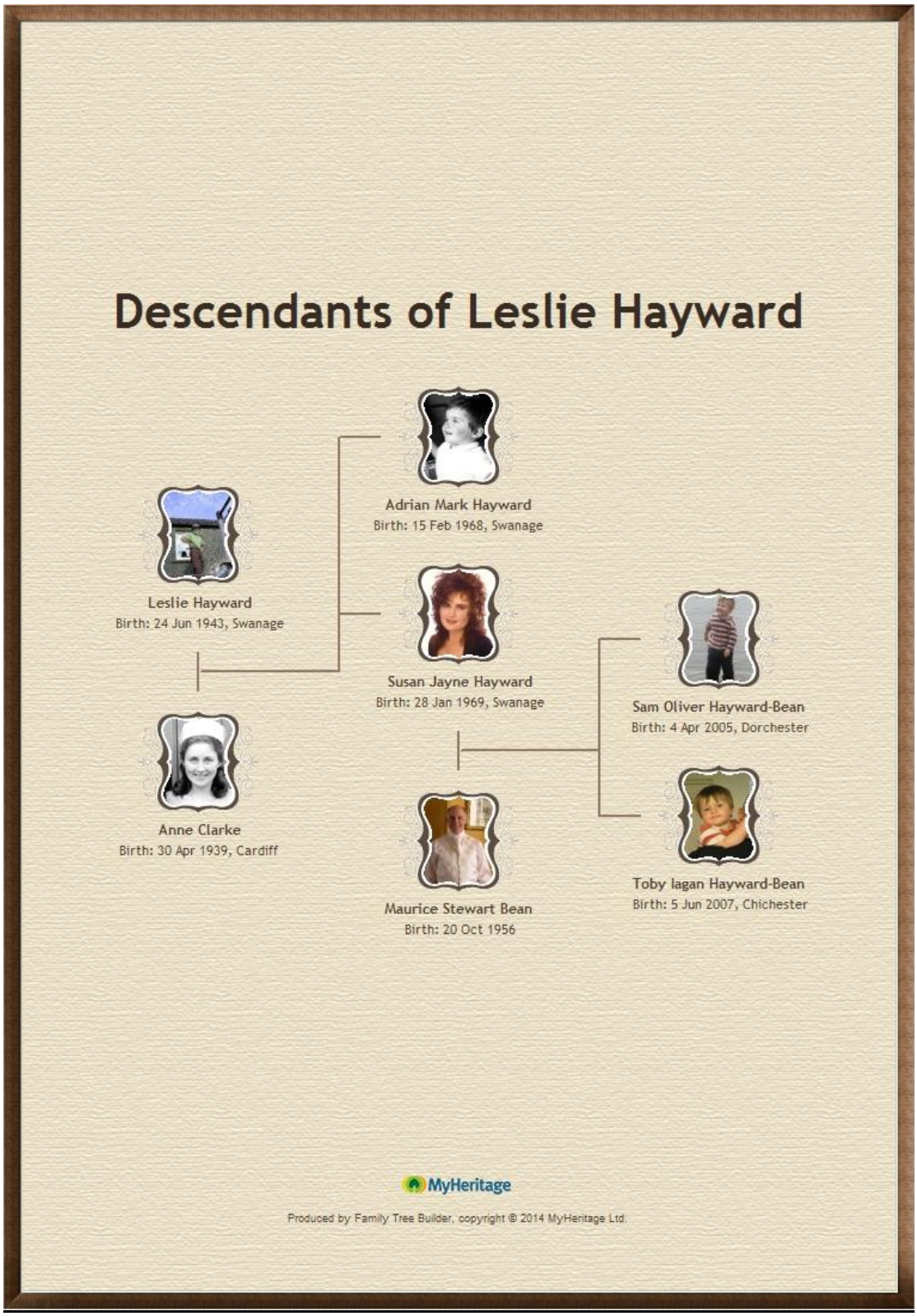
Les. Hayward, ***Cefn Gribyn, Carmel, Anglesey.***

References, Bibliography and family trees

[1] A Pictorial Record of the Royal Naval Cordite Factory (Bowditch & Hayward) ISBN 1-900467-01-1
(Now see the second edition ISBN 978-0-9928554-4-4 Published by Folly Books, Bradford-on-Avon)

[2] Hurn airport was later given the grand title of Bournemouth International Airport.
[3] Chain Home Low – radar which detected low-flying aircraft.
[4] UKAEA – United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.
[5] Atomic Energy Establishment.
[6] The Swanage Branch (Andrew P.M. Wright) Ian Allan Publishing.
[7] Secret Underground Cities et al (N.J. McCamley) Pen & Sword books.
[8] Defence Evaluation and Research Agency.
[9] Information technology.
[10] Centre for Human Sciences.
[11] Defence Scientific and Testing Laboratory.
[12] Systems & Software Engineering Centre.

My immediate family tree (Ancestors)



My Descendants.