

# A (rubber) bridge too far



by Paddy O'Farrell

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First Edition

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WHO DOUBLED NO TRUMPS ?



"Good sex is like good bridge.  
If you don't have a good partner,  
you'd better have a good hand."

Mae West.

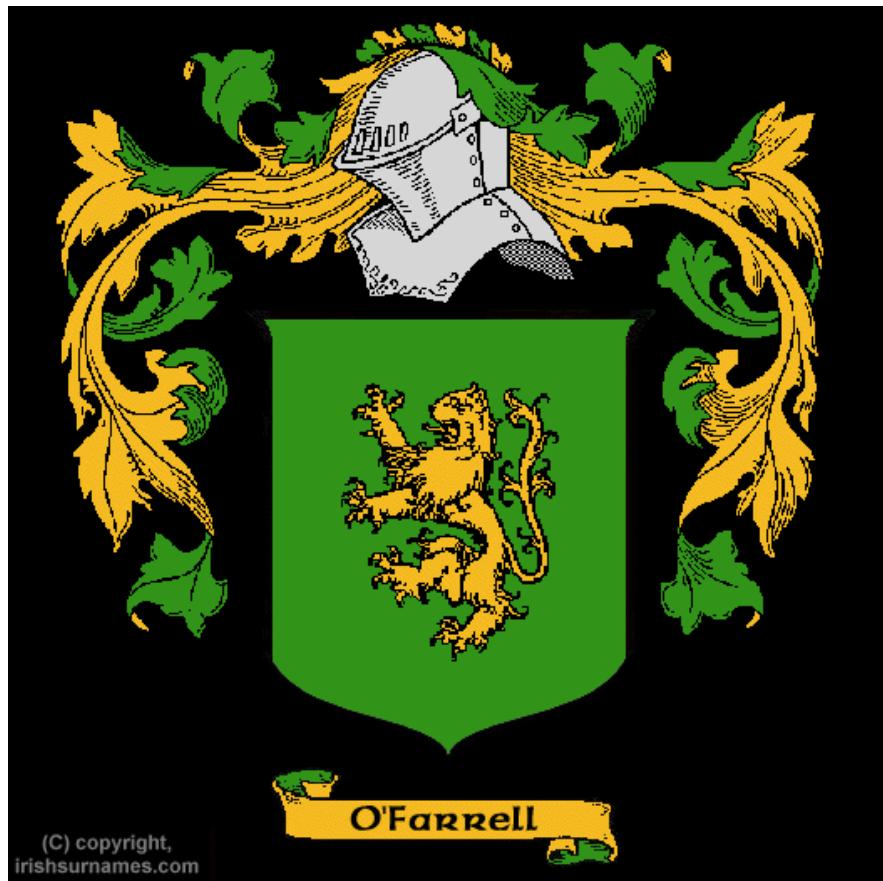
I started writing this to recall my  
memories before dementia set in  
but I think I left it a bit too late.

Some facts may be slightly blurred,  
but as they say in the movies "It's based on a  
true story"!

# **BRIDGE**

**THE MOST FUN YOU CAN  
HAVE WITH YOUR  
CLOTHES ON**





I dedicate this book to my children, Trevor and Antony,  
just in case they might be interested.

# **Book One, Rubber Bridge**

Early days

Apprenticeship at RAF Locking

The real RAF

Kenya

Scotland

Cyprus

Cyprus to the UK overland

Return to the UK and the wedding

The real world, Aylesbury

## **Book One: Rubber Bridge.**

Rubber Bridge involves two pairs of friends, a pack of cards, lots of eating, smoking, drinking, cursing, swearing and laughing. This is normally played at home or in a bar. Once the first game is over it is scored, the pack is shuffled, redealt and replayed and the best of three games wins the rubber. Sometimes there can be two packs of cards which then involves a sequence of shuffling, cutting and dealing that towards the evening can get extremely confusing depending on the amount of booze consumed.

## **Early days**

It all started in Hong Kong. I got posted to RAF Kai Tak on a hush hush mission to install some hush hush radar equipment on top of Tai Mo Shan, "The Lion Mountain" in Kowloon overlooking the Chinese border.

My first game of bridge coincided with the loss of my virginity at the age of nineteen, a spectacularly forgettable experience. As soon as we got off the aircraft we eventually found our way into the bar area of Kowloon. I was dripping with testosterone as we walked into the first bar and I didn't get the chance to pick any beauty, I just ended up with the first one to grab me who had all the necessary equipment and I sat there like a lamb to the slaughter. Having blown my weeks wages I sat down in the NAAFI afterwards for a cup of tea when someone asked me and my mate Cyril to join them in a game of bridge.

Cyril, or John Cyril, Cy, Jake Campbelton was my mentor in life when we met having just signed on in the RAF in 1958 as apprentices at the Number One Radio School, RAF Locking, Weston Super Mare at the tender age of 16.

I always wanted to be a Spitfire pilot like my dad. I don't know if he ever flew Spitfires though. He was a pilot in the RAF. He was also in the Army in the First World War lying about his age and having had the benefit of a public school education at Charterhouse, was commissioned and ended up in Palestine in the Royal Household Artillery. After the war he ended up in the South African mounted police force in Rhodesia. He then joined the Royal Flying Corps and "pranged" an old SE9 biplane made of canvas and string.



This caused a problem with his hip so instead of front line flying he ended up training pilots and by the end of the Second World War was a Wing Commander in charge of Flying Training Canada part of the Empire Training Scheme organisation.

That's where I made my entrance in 1942 and was christened in Ontario in the Mohawk country by an RAF Chaplain with a sense of humour who gave me the full title of Patrick Gershom Little Mohawk O'Farrell. But the Indian connotation was not entered into the official records. The Gershom bit had biblical connotations, being Moses' son and mentioned in Genesis and Exodus as "a stranger in a strange land" which pretty much described my life to a tee.

Dad's full title was Gershom Frederick Parkington O'Farrell but was called Talbot? The family name was previously Farrell but Dad met an old Auntie of his who had a painting of one of our ancestors, a Captain in the Irish Medical Corps in the 17<sup>th</sup> century named O'Farrell and offered it to him on the understanding that he changed our name back.

Now his Dad John (Joshua)Edward Farrell born in 1868 was a pilot as well but a sea captain sailing out of Shanghai and Hong Kong where my Dad was born. Now his Dad Samuel, was born in 1811 He was born in Guernsey and a confidante of Victor Hugo in the 1860's, a seafaring man was a font of knowledge to Hugo about all manner of information useful in his writing.

Apparently, Farrell drove Hugo and his visitors around the island in his carriage. He was a Channel Island Master Mariner of note having captained the *Golden Spur*, one of the most famous sailing ships to sail the Channel Islands waters and overseas. Built in a local shipyard in 1864 and the largest vessel of its kind, it was one of the earliest British vessels to be rigged with double topsails.

The *Golden Spur* made many trading voyages in the Far East and was finally wrecked near Haiphong in 1879 when a tug let go of a tow rope. Samuel Edward Farrell himself died in 1891 when as Master of the British steamship the *Florence* alongside his son William, a member of the ship's crew, the vessel was lost at sea.

I capsized a dinghy in the Milton Keynes sailing club pond once.



Grandad, Captain John Edward Farrell



Grandma, Agnes Jane Parkington

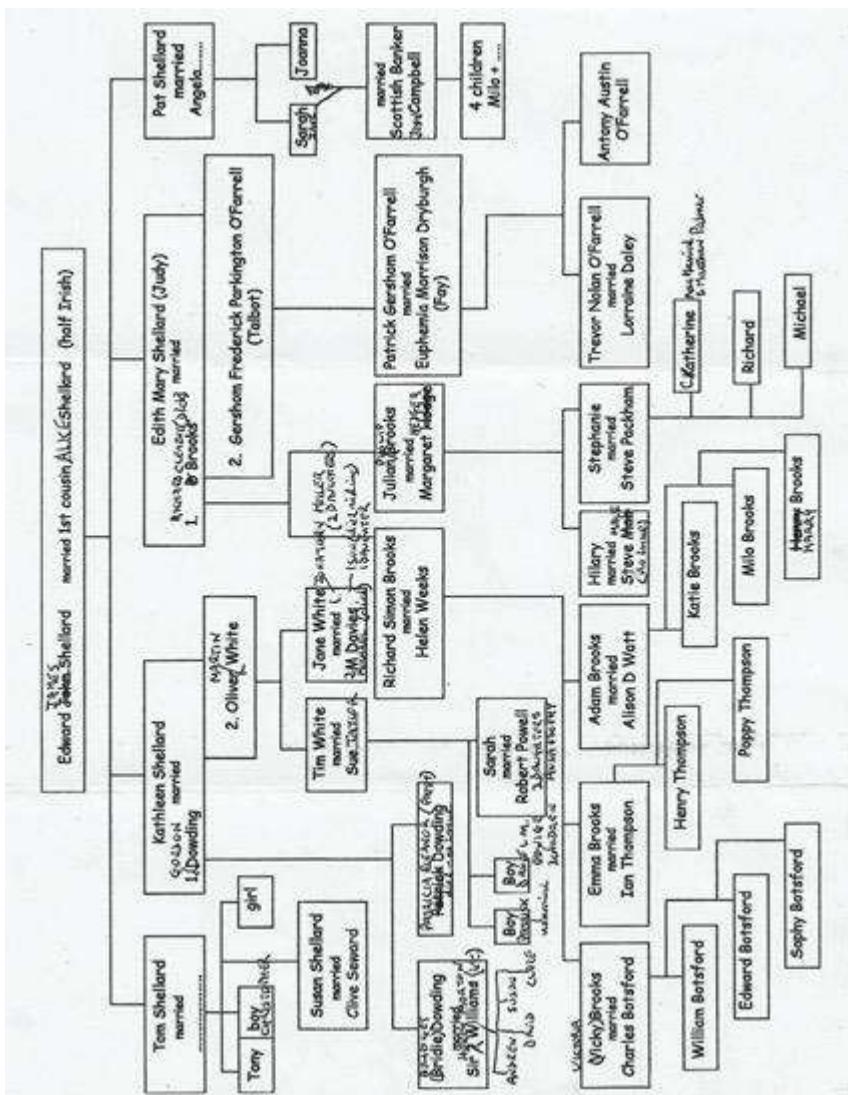


Dad : 1916. Lt. Gershom Frederick Parkington  
"Talbot" O'Farrell



Mum: Edith Mary Shellard "Judith"

# My mum's family tree.





Mum, Dad and me : 1945



Dad's medals: WW1 and WW2



My meagre medal: GSM General Service Medal, South Yemen. I call it Gallantry in service medal for getting shrapnel in my beer in Aden



Mum, Dad and Simon and me : Weston super Mare



Mum, my half brothers Simon, Julian and me.



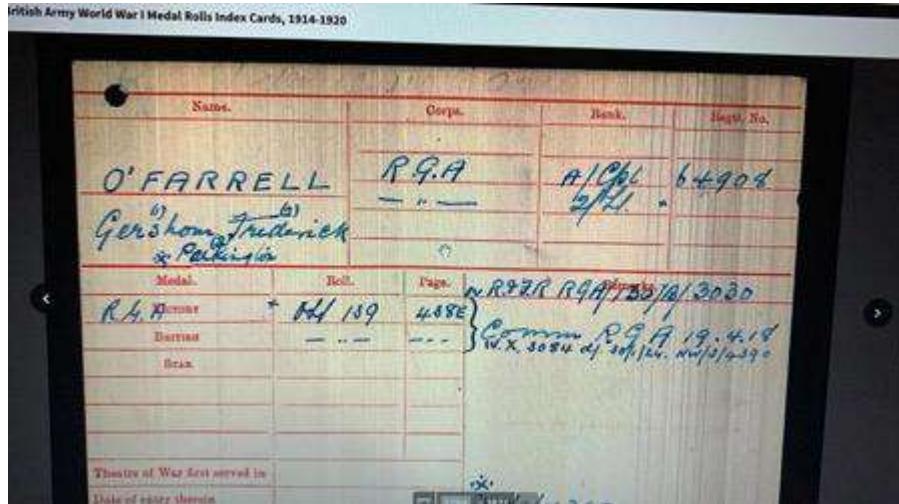
Me, Dad and our caravan home.



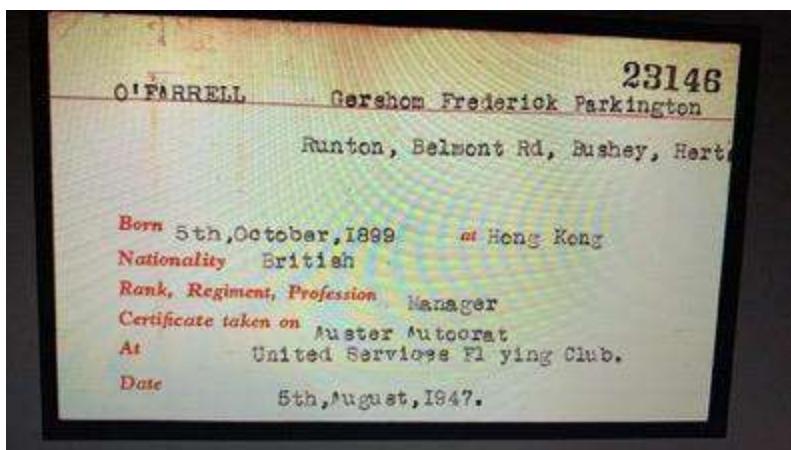
Me in woolly swim suit



My half brother Simon and I circa 1990 in Trevant



Dad's World War 1 record in the Royal Artillery



Dad's pilot certificate at Elstree Flying Club

Once Dad left the RAF at the end of the war and he became a flying instructor and I can briefly remember him at Elstree flying club where he got involved with a rich American who took us shopping down to London in his big flash American car. It

transpired he was only learning to fly to dispose of bodies he had cut up but he got rid of them a little bit too close to the coast and they washed up on beaches.

We lived in Watford then in a big house called "Runton" with lots of parties that I was allowed to watch from my bedroom balcony and from there to Bushey Heath at "Slieve House". There was a Convent just along the road from there where I started my education becoming the teacher's pet as a little blonde blue eyed boy who made his own rosary from plasticine. A precursor to my infamous DIY skills in later life!

I had my first camping experience there. A blanket hung over the washing line and sleeping on a camp bed underneath and waking up with heavy dew on top of me. I remember a famous actor living at the rear of us called Miles Malleson, married to Lady Constance Malleson, he played dotty old men in the Ealing Studios movies. I always wondered what he did before he got old?

Then for Christmas I got measles and for my birthday I got chicken pox in the same year. I had to look at a brand new red scooter at the bottom of my bed for several weeks before I could get out of bed and charge around on it.

From there to Bushey Primary and then to a preparatory boarding school, Shirley House in Watford. I remember packing my trunk with the old leather football boots with a cross strap across the laces and studs that had to be hammered in on a last. And then dubbinning every time after the game. I learnt to swim there being thrown into the deep end into a freezing converted water deposit tank. I don't think it actually had a shallow end.

It was around then that my mother died. Everything seemed to happen when I was eight. She had married before she met Dad to a Mr Brooks, a director at the dry cleaning company Sketchleys who later started his own laundry and hotel linen service based in Bristol. They had two sons, Simon and Julian. I imagined having two half brothers would make one whole brother.

I can briefly remember walking to the hospital with some flowers to see her and all the nurses fawning over me ignorant of my mother's terminal cancer. I remember later going out with nurses as I matured but the only person doing the fawning was me!

After my mother died I was swiftly sent off to stay with the Winter family in St Albans for a year or so and in yet another school. St Alban's primary school I suppose. I always remember playing with the young daughter of the family there in some weird game where we both got undressed and I had to smack her bottom for being naughty. Not very hard obviously and obviously my testosterone hadn't fully developed then.

Anyway this gave my father time to find another mother for me and I duly returned home to live with my new step mother. Dad picked her up giving her flying lessons and that apart from a brief spell in the Royal Observer Corps was the only thing she ever did in her life. She never worked, never had children, never passed her driving test although she did help Dad change gear in his later days in his old Austin Princess when his hip was playing up. That used to frighten the life out of me, rather like being driven around in an out of control tank.

Our first car I can remember was an Austin 8. This was in the late forties and then we progressed to a

Vauxhall 14 in the 50's and later Dad had a Ford V8 Pilot. A beast of a car with it's lovely V8 engine rumbling along. We always had a big car, obviously for towing the caravan but Dad like me always like plenty of head and leg room.

Next stop was Luton Airport. We lived in the flying club there and I remember a very attractive lady who help Dad out in the bar, taking me around the various hangars showing me all the planes and getting several wolf whistles into the bargain.

These were my holidays away from the boarding schools when Dad wasn't too busy. I normally got left at school with the overseas boys from exotic places such as Siam, now Thailand. I used to get some quaint old ladies come and take me out in their Armstrong Siddleys to some tea houses for scones and strawberries but didn't have a clue who the hell they were.

I often wondered why my Dad came out of the RAF and suspected it was for a more stable life. I assumed that he was having to take on more administrative duties as a Wing Commander and wanted to stay in the role of a pilot and also stop flying around the world changing addresses all the time. As it was after Shirley House in Watford I went to a preparatory school in Romsey, Hampshire called Embley Park in Florence Nightingale's old house. A lovely big Victorian building in magnificent grounds with beautiful tall Cedar trees ideal for climbing. Our House Master Mr Leader must be mentioned here at Romsey who had you bent over a chair and he had a chair in between which he jumped over as he came down with the cane. You didn't know where the cane was going to land.

That changed to Romsey College for some strange reason and from there they opened up a new preparatory school in Marchwood Park, on the shores of the Solent. I don't remember much about my education there more about the sport. The school had a Hampshire County cricketer called Mr Budd who gave us lessons and showed me how to swing bowl . Inswingers and outswingers. My thespian days started there where we did do some Shakespeare and I was Puck in Midsummer's Night Dream which we performed outside on a balmy summer's evening.

Then there was Mrs Johnston, the school Matron who fed me on Malt Extract. I think she was trying to fatten me up. I loved the stuff, all sweet and like a thick syrup. Then there was the morning toilet routines where everyone had to use the "loo for a poo" and tick a register with a yes or no as to the results. I always ticked the "Yes" box every day whether I had a result or not just to appease Matron.



That's me with a great mop of blonde hair just two rows up from the headmaster, Mr Henderson.

This was another grand old building with beautiful grounds where I had happy memories of spending my summer holidays with my mate David Foyn, the

Siamese boy. We used to harass the gardener's daughter Deborah, a tall attractive twenty one year old girl who worked in London whose boyfriends were black and we used to interrogate her for all the gory details of her romances. David later turned up on Facebook as an artist in Canada. Another pupil there was Christopher Eames who won mastermind.



Marchwoood Park football eleven (12)

After that I took the eleven plus and sailed through that and went on to a public school in Petersfield, Churchur's College, founded by somebody in Tea. So much for a stable schooling. I remember my first day there and the feeling of utter loneliness and isolation having been dumped there by my parents and sitting in this enormous hall with hundreds of kids having a meal on long benches and tables. It only lasted a few hours before I was up and running around with the others.

Next stop for my Dad was the Isle of Wight, Bembridge Airport. More of a flying club but sometimes used by the aircraft manufacturer Britten Norman. We

lived in a caravan which served as our home for the next few years being towed around the country at Dad's next job.

I was the fire engine driver at Bembridge, an old Morris Bullnose with a bucket of sand and a fire extinguisher in the back and I also had to chase the sheep off the runway.

I lived and breathed aircraft then getting jollies with Dad in Austers, Tiger Moths, Percival Provosts, Miles Magisters and Dads old training aircraft the Avro Anson. Then there were the Airspeed Oxfords, Dragon Rapides and Doves to name but a few, all extinct now but urging me on to my dream of becoming a Spitfire pilot.



This is a photo of Dad training Betty (step Mum) in an Auster.

I used to go swimming in Whitecliffe Bay near Bembridge as and when I was allowed to stay for my holidays. I had to go through the farm to get there which was owned by the Taylor family who had a

phone. I remember having to knock on their door to ask to use the phone and their son and I used to get together sometimes They had a small holiday caravan park and forty years later we took our family down there and bumped into the son who remembered me.

From the Isle of Weight we moved to Gosport, The Royal Navy Air Station Siskin and lived in a caravan site at Stokes Bay next to the beach. It was 1953, the year of the Coronation so we toddles off down to London. Me in my patriotic scout's uniform and a pair of stilts. We found a nice spot in Hyde Park along the Pall Mall. It was raining but we took shelter under a tree until the Queen passed and then Dad took a funny turn and had to get carted off to the Red Cross tent.

Bathing was a strange routine especially in a caravan, but sometimes Dad would take me to a local hotel and we'd share a bath in one of the rooms. I presume he paid for it. At Gosport I could go for a swim in the sea and also we had the luxury of the local public Baths. You were given a towel and soap and a bath in a cubicle all to yourself.

He was knocking on a bit and had to pack in flying and I think he ran out of money to fund my boarding school education as well so I had to change to a day boy at the public school in Petersfield were we moved to in a farm caravan site run by the Broadway family.

I had protruding front teeth and had to visit a special orthodontist which involved getting a bus, then a train and another bus to find this practice. I think he overdid it a bit and pulled my teeth back too far, but it got me into the travel bug at an early age. When we lived at Gosport I took a train from Petersfield to Southampton to meet Mum and Dad but they were nowhere to be seen at the station so I just hopped on a

bus after several enquiries and walked the rest of the way to the caravan site, opened the window crawled in and waited for their return. I thought they might be pleased to see me, but no, I got a belting instead.

I was playing with some friends on a common at Gosport when a man came over in a raincoat smelling of perfume. For some strange reason I sensed danger and grabbed one of the girls and ran. It wasn't for another ten years or more before I was aware of strange men who preyed on children. Was that some basic instinct in bred into humans that caused me to sense danger?

It all started to go downhill from there as the farmer's son introduced me to girls. He, with his sister and another girl and I would go up into an old loft in one of the farm's outbuildings used for storage where we would explore each other's sexual anatomies so to speak."You show me yours and I'll show you mine?"

There was a lot of suitcases and stuff up there and we found a pistol wrapped up in an oily rag with bullets in one suitcase which gave us a bit of a scare. But that kick started my testosterone and from the safety of an all boy's boarding school I was thrust into a state mixed grammar school in the New Forest. Brockenhurst County High School first then once again I got moved to a another new school, Totton Grammar School that got amalgamated with a school from Eastleigh. My testosterone squelched my brain into a soggy mess. All these girlie beings strutting about with sticky out things in front.

I was captain of cricket, captain of rugby, albeit the smallest in the team, made a house captain but not a Prefect as my class results were a tad below par. The rugby inter school matches were always played on a

Saturday afternoon and I was always fed a good helping of bangers and mash at home before the match. It's still my favourite meal.

I ended up in 5B, a class full of farmer's sons and I picked up a strong Hampshire Hog accent. My poor parents could hardly understand me. I remember a saying "so 'n' muh, nice day muck spreading snuh?" Which broadly translated into "what's on then mush? It's a nice day for muck spreading isn't it?"

Those were halcyon days in the New Forest. I had a dog called Ricky and we would go off in the morning into the woods and come home for meals. God know what we did. I remember collecting butterflies but this was probably the start of my "bubble", my own little adventure land. Cops and robbers, pirates and the occasional Spitfire Pilot where some of my dreams no doubt. Probably where I got the inspiration from for all my books.

My first "girlfriend" was Christine who I asked back for tea. She was a pianist with dishpan hands. She thought I was a gypsy living in a caravan. So that didn't last long. I used to ride home sometimes from school with Isobel who lived in a funny little village called Pook's Green. I would stop off there for tea, cakes and a bit of sexual harassment. She was engaged to a Boiler Maker. A big bugger, twice her age and she got pregnant and left school early. She got fed up with my romantic advances and put me in touch with my first proper girl friend. Bridget who lived in Southampton.

I went steady with her throughout my years at RAF Locking. Every time I watch "South Pacific" I remember her and also the 1957 film "The girl can't help it" with Jane Mansfield and all the early rockers: Fats Domino; Eddy Cochran; Little Richard; Richie

Valens; and Gene Vincent. I was torn between the rock' n' roll beat and Jane Mansfield's bosom.

I had an auntie and an uncle apparently. The Uncle was born on the wrong side of the sheets allegedly in Shanghai, Granny had a bike (she also had a sedan chair) and got around a bit so poor old uncle, he was only a teenager, got turned out of house and home and sent to Australia at an early age. He ended up in the wine business in the Murumbidgee Valley.

Auntie Ismene was bought up in Shanghai by a Chinese amah and then moved to France and when she returned to England was only able to speak Cantonese and French. She got married and had a son, James who was in the RAF doing his National Service and rolled up at our meagre caravan site in the New Forest in a red Singer Le Mans sports car which I thought was really cool. He was being trained at Compton Basset, another RAF Radio School. Unfortunately he died of glandular fever before he finished training.

Dad was teaching at my old preparatory school at Marchwood Park and we lived in the grounds of the school in a little sort of allotment. Water was from a tap at the bottom of the garden and we used an Elsan toilet in the caravan which I had to take out into the middle of the fields to empty much to the interest of the cows. I washed in cold water every morning as one did in boarding schools and to this day I still do. The cows also liked my trumpet practices as well which had to stop when we moved to a built up area.

The school at Marchwood Park closed down during the holidays and rented the place out to other children's establishments. One group from Manchester I presumed were from underprivileged backgrounds. They asked what were those things in the fields. They had never

seen horses and cows before. Then there was a girl's school from Kent and I met the lovely long legged Felicity from Sidcup. I used all my charm and romance and took her down to the lake to show her the moorhen's nests. I thought I was so cool but I think the word was "gauche". I had a lot to learn about girls, and come to think about it still have.

Dad bought me a separate caravan to save making the bed up to lounge seats in the big caravan. And along rolls dear old Auntie Ismene who ended up staying for a year, so I got shoved out of my caravan and into a tent in the garden. I had a canvas and wooden camp bed, an orange box as a side table and shared the family tin bath. I had a crystal set and listened to Radio Luxembourg.

We had a radio in the main caravan and listened to "Billy Cotton's Band Show" on a Sunday lunch time along with "Much Binding in the Marsh" and "Round the Horn". Then of course there was the "Goon Show" which Mum and Dad could not understand so I had to go into my tent to listen to that.

When we lived in Bushey Heath I was allowed to stay up to listen to "Journey into Space" with David Jacobs, Alfie Bass and David Kossoff as Doc, Lemmy and Mitch. Boy was that scary. Then there was "Dick Barton – Special Agent" with Snowy and Jock. We never had television then, we didn't even have electricity in the caravan. Everything was run off gas.

Our next door neighbour in Bushey had a TV and I was allowed to watch some programmes. My favourite was one with old biplanes in dogfights. The neighbour used to go to the USA a lot and bought me back a signed autograph of Roy Rogers with his famous horse Trigger. Now that was cool. I had a Viewmaster"

machine to watch 3D slides with Hoppalong Cassidy and "The Cisco Kid".

Happy days. I had the company of the New Forest ponies as well who used to come and wipe their bottoms against my tent pole in the middle of the night. I had to wash at the tap at the bottom of the garden in all weathers before cycling seven miles to school. Boy, was I fit!

And such a good Christian lad as well. I went to church at Dibden and sung in the choir and was the organist's assistant pumping the bellows. I used to read the lessons from the pulpit on special occasions and go on the church outings. Now they were something else. Lots of smooching with the girls in the back of the coach. Not forgetting singing carols around the villages at Christmas. I was a right little goody two shoes. I had some friends who lived in Dibden Purlieu. What a lovely name. We used to go to their house and I asked who that was walking around upstairs. "Oh, that's our friendly ghost" they said. Well that put the creepers on me right away but it was true. Wierd?

I had a paper round as well and took over from a lazy lad who left the papers outside. I took them to the doorstep. It was a large round being out in the country with lots of farms with big farmer's dogs but I got lots of large tips at Christmas enough to buy a decent bike.

I used to go to school with Mike Norris a big strong lad whose Dad owned a pub on the front at the port in Marchwood. He was part of the rugby team along with Tim Duel who lived on a farm on the coast. All my mates were big lads. Well, I had to have some sort of security being the titch of the pack. We used to go swimming in the River Test. No Health and Safety rules then. The river was fast flowing and we used to

jump in at the top of the river and get out further down. How nobody was drowned was a miracle, but we were young and stupid and enjoyed ourselves.

Then I went down to Lymington for the annual regatta and rowed in a race where you had to paddle the oar at the rear of the dinghy and I think we won something. Can't for the life of me remember who was with me then, it was probably the same pal who used to go paddling with me in the mud at Calshot where the flying boats were stationed.

Dad bought an old motor launch and Mum and I got dragged in to help renovate it. It was moored at Ealing, just up the Solent from Marchwood. A forty footer with four beds, sorry, berths, and it had a funnel. It had an Armstrong Siddley engine converted to marine use by Ford. We used to *put put* up and down the Solent but not getting too far out into the traffic round the Isle of Wight. Unfortunately some drunken yobos pulled the bung out and it sank and warped all the boards and had to be written off. That broke Dad's heart but he never believed in insurance so had to take the consequences.

Our school entered for the New Forest School's Athletic championships and I was put in the 110 yards hurdle race and came second (out of two) and was therefore chosen to represent the New Forest Schools in the County Championships. I had to go up in front of the whole school at assembly and receive my medal and badge and then on to the finals where I came last by a mile. Pretty clever in a 110 yard race?

I always seemed to get volunteered for various sporting events in lieu of anybody else. I was chosen to represent Hampshire in the ATC (Air Training Corps) County Cricket championships and had to go down to

RAF Innsworth in Gloucestershire and then got selected, (volunteered) to go to some swimming final where once again I shone in last position but got all the kudos beforehand.

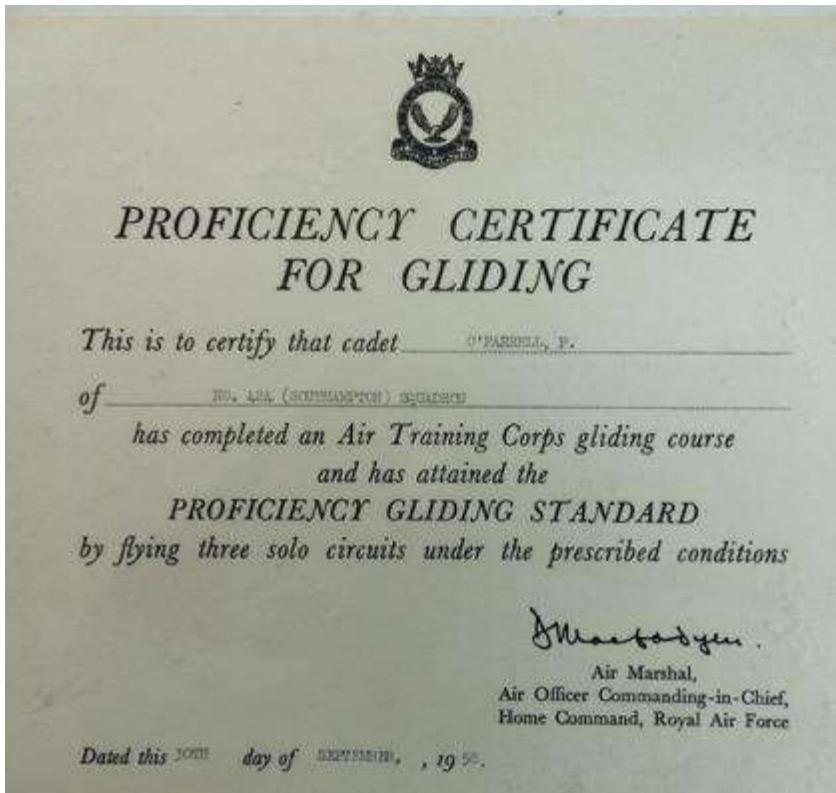
Just before I joined the RAF I went on a gliding course in the ATC and at the age of fifteen and flew solo. You couldn't drive a car until you were seventeen and there I was in charge of an aeroplane without an engine all on my own. I have to say it was the most exhilarating experience of my life. You were God up there in the blue sky blowing raspberries down to the instructors!



424 Squadron Air Training Cadets  
(I'm 2<sup>nd</sup> on the right, 2<sup>nd</sup> row up)

By modern standards these gliders were antiques made of wood and canvas not fibreglass. How they ever managed to get such a heavy beast into the air was a mystery and then to do a loop the loop in an open cockpit (with the instructor) was breathtaking, aka shitting one's pants! My Dad had to go to the ATC

ceremony to collect my gliding certificate as I had by then signed up in the RAF and once on the podium shook hands with some Air Marshall who turned out to be one of his pupils during the war in Canada.



### Gliding certificate after 3 solo flights

One of the many summer camps with the ATC was held at RAF Tangmere and I very nearly got a flight in an NF11 Gloucester Meteor. Wow! Things had changed a bit since my dreams of a Spitfire. These summer camps were great fun, being allowed in the Airmen's Mess to eat with proper Airmen. I also went to North Luffenham and visited Cambridge with a trip on

the River Cam in a punt. We used the public outdoor pool there and ignoring the sign "No Diving" dived in only to come out with my stomach all grazed. It was a gravel bottom pool.

I had been promoted to the dizzying heights of Corporal Cadet and used to have to drill the "sprogs" in our little hut just outside Hythe. We learnt weapons training as well as navigation, comparing ground speed to airspeed and great circle lines. I used to have to bike from Marchwood to Hythe for the evening classes sometimes in freezing weather on slippery roads and got stopped by the police once for not having a rear light which by chance got kicked as I stopped and got "moved along" as it switched itself on by magic.

So I said goodbye to my school days, the happiest days of one's life apparently. That was to come later. But at least I didn't get bullied or buggered even though I was always the smallest kid. I did get the cane or the slipper quite a lot even from my Dad who I saw cutting a branch from a birch tree before corporal punishment was delivered after I had borrowed my mates bicycle without asking him while he was on holiday.

So off I went to sign on to do my duty for Queen and Country.



Totton Grammar School rugby XV. That's me squeezed in the middle.

# **Apprenticeship at RAF Locking**

I was first sent to RAF Halton for initial selection interviews and got woken up at six o'clock in the morning by bag pipes and walked down through the low cloud and rain to breakfast which consisted of tinned tomatoes, tinned sausages etc. Yuck! I was then told I had been selected to go down to Locking and off we went on a charabanc down to Weston Super Mare. The sun shone and we had roast beef, Yorkshire puddings and roast potatoes for lunch.

'This is where I want to do my spitfire pilot training' I said.

'This is Number One Radio School' I was politely informed and duly signed on as an apprentice there.

Cyril took over in the school of life. Five foot square and all muscle, a Londoner (he was Kentish) having had all the skills of life to hand, smoking, drinking, swearing, fighting, playing football and poker. He was a brilliant poker player who could read the cards and eventually ended up playing bridge internationally for the Isle of Man. I followed him like a little puppy learning everything a young man should know about the bare necessities of life.

So the secondary modern and the grammar school educations merged into a relationship with Cyril: something like Laurel and Hardy; Sooty and Sweep or Little and Large.

In the overall scheme of things I had to do my three years apprentice training there and could pickup some more GCE's if I wanted and then reapply for a *Spitfire* Pilot so I went back to school, albeit in a uniform with some drill sessions thrown in but with a

big learning curve ahead of me. I was, and still am, confused as to how these little electrons get around as I'm buggered if I could ever see any of them. I got to *feel* them a lot.

Of course there was lots of sport involved and competition between each entry who were allocated to a squadron. We were the 90<sup>th</sup> Entry and as there were three entries every year the senior entry was the 82nd Entry and 3 Squadrons. We were in C Squadron with the 87<sup>th</sup> and 84<sup>th</sup> Entries.

I had previously found a racquet and ball in Dad's old sports bag and when we lived in the New Forest and used to go up to the big indoor garage and beat the hell out of this poor little rubber ball which I later found out was called squash. So I started playing squash at Locking and was quickly the Station Number One player. The Station Commander, a Group Captain was number one at the time and didn't take kindly to having a snotty nosed little "erk", someone who wasn't even a proper airman, knocking seven bells out of him.

It was very embarrassing when we played in the Somerset League. After the match there was tea and cakes which were always held in the Officer's Mess. Of course I wasn't allowed in there which the other team found very strange. I later went on the play in the RAF Junior championships held at Halton and played off in the final.

We played competitions against other local RAF stations: Yatesbury; Melksham and also Millfield school. The number one at Millfield was a member of the Khan squash dynasty. An eleven year old, weak as a kitten who couldn't do press ups but who could thrash the Somerset County Champion. I was allowed a bye against him thank God

It was the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1958 when I got on a train to Weston-super-Mare and then joined nearly one hundred and fifty other new recruits on the coach to RAF Locking. We got allocated a wooden hut, twenty to each hut with an old iron coal burner in the middle and got issued with all the necessities for beds and clothing.

After getting our uniforms we then had to start to understand the rigours of keeping everything clean and tidy. The linoleum floors had to be polished with a bumper. A square lump of iron with a handle and a wad of felt for the polish. You had to be able to see your face in the floor. Every morning you had to arrange your blankets and sheets into what was called a "Blanket Pack" and it had to be in regulation dimensions and ready for inspection.

One poor lad whose pack looked like a dog's dinner was questioned "what the hell do you call that!". He immediately rattled off a reply : "blanket sheet, blanket sheet, blanket sheet, with a blanket wrapped round it. Sir!" The rest of the billet was hard pressed to suppress a snigger. The rest of the bed was laid out to order with the other items of clothing and equipment such as the brass button stick used to go behind your buttons to stop the Brasso getting on the uniform. The blanco brush used to clean all your webbing, your irons (knife, fork and spoon) and of course everyone had a "housewife". This was a small sewing and darning kit. And your mug which had to be immaculate or it was destined to be smashed by the inspecting NCO.

Each hut or billet had a resident apprentice NCO from one of the senior entries. The senior entries used to walk through a billet at night turning all the beds over with incumbents when asleep. We found this a bit disconcerting and as we grew older and bolder realised

that our numbers vastly exceeded some of the senior entries and retaliated much to their surprise.

One of the first and most important things that had to be done was to get a letter from your parents giving you permission to smoke. Only then were you allowed to use the smoking compound outside the billets. A small area about a couple of square yards with a gravel floor and you were regularly inspected for the necessary paper work.

Then there was the pay parades when you got marched down to No three block and lined up in alphabetical order until your name was called then a quick pace up to the table, stand to attention, salute and shout out you last three of your service number.

“Sir, 861 O’Farrell, Sir” one never forgot one’s service number : 684861 which later got digitalised to TO684861. I was paid ten shillings on my first payday and rushed off to the NAAFI to buy a packet of Peter Stuyvescent cigarettes. Enormously long things with filter tips that felt as if you would fall off the end of them. I thought I was really cool then.

So we started our three year apprenticeship and soon were back to school in one of the old hangars or technical blocks as they were called, and you had to march everywhere. Block 1 was Ground Wireless, Block 2 was Ground Radar, Block 4 was indoor parade ground and classrooms and labs. We also had NAAFI break there. Block 5 was Air Comms and Air Radar. We also had Pay parades there on Thursday lunchtimes.

We had to march to the mess and to the classes and we were watched by the NCOs in charge of discipline. Corporal Willey Whiley still keeps in touch with us to this day. Sergeant Mackenzie and Flight

Sergeant Pollard were the other NCOs , all of whom kept us on our toes with drill on the parade ground. They cycled past me one time and Pollard let out a loud fart and muttered under his breath “50 guineas and ounce. Straight from gay Paree!” They were the butt of our mischief often finding their bikes hung up on the water tower.

Our boots had to be polished to a mirror finish using the old “Spit and Polish” routine when you had to rub several layers of polish mixed with saliva onto the boots until you achieved the “shine”. It was quite an art and some of us were good at it and others had to pay for our services or suffer the consequences.

We weren’t allowed out for the first few months and then only in uniform. The new entry *sprogs* had to wear uniform for the first year when they went out and then for the next year they were allowed to wear standard blazers and grey flannels. Each entry had its own entry badge which I designed, to go on the blazer.



We were pretty smartly dressed young men who impressed the local girls much to the annoyance of the local Somerset yocals who used to take it out on any stray apprentices whenever they could. The local gang leader was one Billy Marshall. I met someone in Spain who knew him and who had also lived in one of the modern estate houses built at the old RAF camp.

Billy and Cyril often clashed. Billy was the same shape as Cyril only a bit fatter but not nearly as fit. I was always behind Cyril as a sort of back if needed. God forbid. They used to have mild skirmishes but always ended mates and getting drunk together. Phew!

At the Easter weekends the *Mods and Rockers* used to come down to Weston and take it out on us but we had a cunning plan. Once the trouble started there was a relay system back to camp to get everybody down to the front. We all hid below the promenade on the sand and put a few sitting ducks up as decoys and once the yobos made their move, someone blew the whistle, and just like the First World War everybody went over the top and dealt with the matter at hand.

I was out playing squash when this happened and got searched returning to camp by the "Snowdrops", the RAF Police at the guardroom for offensive weapons and had to explain what a squash racquet was for. There was a small inoffensive young lad was pulled in for questioning and when he opened his raincoat was found to have two foot of lead piping hiding in his sleeve, with blood stains on it!



1958 in *civies* at RAF Locking with the old wooden huts at the back.



684861 Aircraft Apprentice O'Farrell in uniform  
ready for the parade in Weston super Mare.



Parade in Weston super Mare 1959

RAF Locking was awarded the freedom of the borough for some sort of similar action which meant we had to go on parade, get inspected and march though the town every year at weekends spoiling our social routine. That'll teach us!

The camp was divided into two parts: the apprentices and the airmen. The proper "airmen" had their own billets, mess and NAAFI at the bottom of the camp on the other side of the technical blocks where there used to be a bog. They were called the "boggies" and they consisted of the regular volunteer airmen and the National Service airmen or "Nashers". The initial training was for mechanics who then got promoted to fitters. All airmen had to do their basic training or "squarebashing" at places like RAF Swinderby, a six week course that then designated each airman to a trade and stationed them on to their respective training school

The apprenticeship included the “squarebashing” bit and we passed out as fitters with the rank of Junior Technician, a sort of Lance Corporal only with trade pay. The first year was spent mostly in classrooms and the warm soporific summer weather made it very difficult to stay awake in the warm afternoons listening to “Ohms Law” or “Kirchoffs Law of Induction” not forgetting waveguides and frequency theory. Basic electric and electronic theory with valves and magnetrons. I think we did cover the basics of transistors but it was all black magic to me.

Then we had to go to “Diesel Dan’s ” class on combustion engines. We had to learn how to solder and how to wind our own transformers in the metal bashing workshop classes which eventually ended up with us having to make a working amplifier with vacuum pentodes et al.

We also had to do Cultural Studies as part of our general educational syllabus. A jovial Squadron Leader Tinline lectured us on world events, history and sundry other things but he was easily led astray and would regale us with his own adventures. Then we had to do Maths, Technical drawing and English. We had to do a thesis and prepare for a presentation. I hated Maths at school but fell in love with Calculus and when I ended my career in the RAF went to a technical college and thrived on Boolean Algebra.

At the end of the first year there was an exam which had to be passed by at least sixty percent before you could carry on with the training. I broke my leg the day before the exam and took it in hospital. I only just got fifty percent but was given the benefit of the doubt due to extraneous circumstances as I pleaded great pain causing my bad results. If you failed you had to go

down an entry and start all over again. Once past that hurdle you then had to choose your specific trade. The choices varied from Air Radar, Air Radio, Ground Radar, Ground Radio etc.

I couldn't see "Spitfire Pilot" anywhere so I think I chose Air Radar. Your exam results helped you to get your preference. I ended up with Ground Wireless. There was an education department where you could go for extra curriculum classes but I was too busy learning life's extra curriculum.

So now everybody got allocated a new billet, hut 358, according to their new class and trade and so Cyril and I moved on together again. We were joined by Neil "Taff" Grant which was the start of a long lasting friendship.

So that was the end of our first year which included trips to the cinema on camp aptly name the "Astra" which meant as per the RAF motto "Per adua ad astra" (through adversity to the stars) or "after work to the pictures!" As this was restricted solely to camp personnel it was open to a lot of verbal comments during the performance. The most popular of all were the Tom and Jerry cartoons directed by Fred Quimby which were always started with a chorus of "Good old Fred!"

There were other benefits of wearing a uniform off camp apart from pulling the local ladies. I used to go home sometimes hitch hiking and thumbed a lift in uniform and always got picked up fairly quickly, mostly by truckers but quite often by posh cars such as Jaguars driven by ex servicemen. This was soon stopped this after the IRA started their campaign against the services.

There was a squadron "Shield" competition where everyone took part in and got points per event all going to your squadron. I persevered with the hurdles without much success but did quite well in the discus. Boxing was the main event where everyone got herded into one of the "T" Blocks at night and screamed their heads off for each squadron bout.

I don't remember squash being included in the competition as I was probably the only apprentice playing. It was introduced during the war to give the pilots some form of exercise and became an officer's only domain. I was sent to RAF Halton as part of the RAF Junior squash championship and made it through to the final against all the other Boy Entrant and Apprentices.

Cyril was a good footballer but changed tracks when introduced to rugby which he soon realised was a thugs game played by gentlemen and loved the physical contact bit.

Then of course there was the rifle range. As part of Her Majesties Armed Forces we had to be able to shoot people, the enemy mostly and were allowed to practice on a Lee Enfield 303. Now I'm not saying this rifle was old but it was introduced into the British Army in 1895. It weighed a ton and had a kick like a mule. The fact that it could stop a charging elephant at two hundred yards was neither here nor there. Not only did we have to shoot with it but we also had to clean, polish and drill with it for parades along with a vicious looking bayonet.

There is a lovely story about the RAF who were always considered the namby pamby of the three services, the "Brylcream Boys" who never saw front line action apart from yes, the Spitfire Pilots. The three

services were asked what they would do if they found a scorpion in their tent.

"Get my gun out and shoot it" says the Army boy.

"Get my marine commando knife out and stab it" says the Navy lad.

"I'd ring up room service and ask what the bloody hell a tent was doing in my room?" says the RAF boyo.

We musn't forget *jankers*. If you were a naughty boy you got charged, put on a "fizzer" on the form 252. This meant a trip to the Squadron Office, marched in front of the Officer and your misdemeanours read out by the person who charged you and given the necessary punishment in the form of "jankers". This probably involved peeling potatoes or gardening or painting stones white to be carried out in your free time. I can't actually remember doing any jankers but I did do a spell in prison. But that's another story.

So we all started our second year after being allocated a trade and now started to do the "hands on" stuff on actual working equipment. The Ground Wireless classes were held in 3 Block dealing with transmitters, receivers and associated communications equipment such as teleprinters, cyphers and decoders, line amplifiers and a brief introduction to aerials and waveguides. This involved learning about valves, diodes, pentodes and the occasional transistor and learning how to read a circuit diagram and fault find with test equipment. The old Avometer and spectrum analysers, what ever they were. We called them Rectum Paralysers.

Of course we all had to go to church every Sunday irrelevant of your religion. We were mostly C of E with some Catholics but anybody else was catalogued as non

denomination and told to wait outside. You couldn't even have a fag.

Of course this was my formative years when I could be easily influenced, one way or the other, but music played an important role here. This was the start of the "Rock & Roll" era when Bill Hailey had us throwing cinema seats around and "Skiffle" was a major influence but not before Traditional Jazz.

The Winter Gardens at Weston super Mare was the place to be where we could go on a Saturday night and practice our jiving. But there were a group of us who preferred the Two Beat Stomp and we used catch a train to go to Bristol and start the evening off at the Cellar bars with a schooner of Bristol Cream Sherry. And then off to the Chinese Jazz Club. I still, to this day don't understand why it was called "Chinese". Apart from a couple of Joss sticks that was it. But this was the era of Acker Bilk, a local Somerset man who got us all dancing together with Chris Barber, Monty Sunshine along with Kenny Ball.

I mastered the stomp and would dance all night long, well, until the last train back to Weston and reckon I must have lost half a stone in sweat. There were Chinese Jazz clubs in Bath, Bristol and Bridgewater. Again I was mystified as to why they all had to start with a "B".

I bought some cowboy boots and a Panama hat and thought I was the coolest dude. Although I was never short of jive partners I never ended up actually pulling a bird. Too sophisticated for the Somerset set?

Lonnie Donegan was the big Skiffle King and a lot of skiffle groups ended up as Jazz bands. The Ken Collier band was the most revered and Cyril still has his

EP of mine. There was always somebody with a "Dansette" gramophone player in the billet who could play our 45's or we could go to the coffee shops and play the Juke Box. The "popular" music was of course Elvis and Cliff Richard at that time along with the other Brits Joe Brown, Marty Wilde, Billy Fury et al.

So our second year at Locking we had to deal hands on the real stuff. Being the Ground Wireless class we concentrated on HF transmitters and receivers. HF being High Frequency as opposed to VHF and UHF which was ground to air or air to air transmission.

We had to send communication signals around the earth using the ionosphere to bounce around the world. This meant that we had to change frequencies as the ionosphere got lower or higher. This meant changing the transmitting frequencies which meant changing the resonant frequency of the output amplifiers, this meant changing the values of the components.

We had our training on an old SWAB 8 transmitter which was probably as old as the Lee Enfield rifles. You had to take the transformers out and remake them using interchangeable copper inductance coils for every different frequency. This was called a "QSY" which was code for frequency change which would come from the COMCEN, Communications Centre who could monitor the state of the signal strengths.

Of course this involved considerable power and considerable high voltages and a "debollocker" stick was highly recommended to discharge all the condensers before starting to get fingers involved. I actually say a colleague, a certain long legged Jones from Cumberland who got 10,000 volts up his backside and did a somersault in the air. He got up brushed himself down

and said "Jesus needs me". He was of the religious persuasion.

We were allowed out in blazers and flannels with our own entry badge. I still have my entry car badge and have updated the badge a bit for cards. When the school closed down for Xmas, Easter and summer breaks and we got travel warrants which allowed us free rail travel to specified addresses.

My parents had moved to Reading where Dad had a job in a school in a village called Eversley and a nice old Gatehouse in the school ground. Dad had a piano and no more caravans or tents. However I would probably go and stay with Taff Grant down in Swansea. We would go down to the Mumbles or the Gower peninsular. His big sister had a boyfriend who had a scrambler motorbike and we would go off to his events and help out there. I tried it once. It had an enormous flywheel at the back which gave it enormous acceleration and I went off like a rocket and ended up arse over tit in a golf bunker. We had a gang of boys and girls who would meet up in the local cafes but no serious partnerships.

I was still going out with Bridget on a regular basis so would spend weekends and stay with her in Southampton. We would go off to Bournemouth or other local attractions and I had to give a running commentary upon my return to the billet. Obviously there was a certain amount of exaggeration thrown in as I learnt the art of bullshitting which came in handy in my sales career later on.

My half brother Simon would sometimes come down from Bristol where he lived and take me for a spin in his Swallow Dorretti, a hotted up version of the

Triumph TR2. He would drive up the Cheddar Gorge, a narrow winding road and scare the shit out of me.

Apart from the school classes there was always square bashing and I was “volunteered” for the inter squadron drill competition. This involved carrying out a number of marching and rifle drill movements without any vocal orders. The parade ground would be marked out by chalk into segments where you had to turn or do other drill movements. This would involve drilling with rifles as well, presenting arms or sloping arms during the marching programmes.

You obviously had to learn the marching routine first until it was achieved without any orders and then introduce the rifle sequences. Once you got it right it was quite impressive and I have watched squads like the RAF Regiment doing similar routines at the Edinburgh Tattoo but a tad more professional compared to our little amateur show.

This was under the watchful eye of our drill instructors including Corporal Derek “Willy ” Whiddle who is still around and turns up at our reunions. We also had to do public parades in town for the local bigwigs and sometimes in the rain. This involved “blancoing” our webbing which would run all over our best blue uniforms.

Then of course we were to achieve our dreams and get taken up for a flight in a real aircraft. Joy of Joys! It wasn’t a spitfire or a Lancaster, a sort of compromise. A Vickers Varsity. It could squeeze about a dozen of us in and there would be some radio gadgets to play with on a flight lasting about ten minutes. It was based at an old airfield just down the road to Weston with a grass runway. It looked like a pig and flew like one as well. The aircrew must have been well pissed off

having to ferry a bunch of teenagers about all the time. But this all added to our motivation to "Reach for the Sky" as Kenneth More would say. That and "The Dambusters" were the favourite films for the RAF Recruitment offices and would pop up now and then at the "Astra" cinema on camp.

Apart from the NAAFI there was a YMCA on camp for tea and coffee and soft drinks. Just another social place but for some weird reason I got put on a committee there and had to go into Bristol for further committee meetings. As with most things then it was and still is a bit of a mystery. I think there were girls involved in some way which no doubt lured me away.

So we finished our second year of our apprenticeship and were now thrown into the heady realms of the senior entries and could wield our authority on the sprogs. We could go out into town in suits now and I have vivid memories of going into Burtons to get my first made to measure suit. A black and white dogstooth check. Boy, was I the doggies bollocks or what? I think I more resembled a bookies runner. I was going for a PhD in gauche. We always got inspected at the guardroom before going out and I used to pose in my super suit in the mirror at the guard room gate. And of course there were the suede shoes as well and the cravat.

We went strawberry picking to bring in a bit of pocket money and invariably blew our earnings in the local pub there and then. On one occasion we were at a small village of Draycott, near Cheddar and were sitting outside the pub on a lovely summers evening after a hard day in the strawberry fields. The pub overlooked the station yard where they loaded the strawberries onto the train.

There was a cry from the station master's house from an upstairs window from a young girl berating her father for locking her in. Her boyfriend arrived on his tractor and came into the pub. We soon got talking to him and after several pints of the local rough cider we got our heads together and devised a plan to rescue this poor maiden in distress.

So off we went to the station masters house and tied the station master to a chair, the young lad went upstairs and rescued his fair maiden (she was bossed eyed) which allowed the two young lovers to elope to Cheddar on his tractor. I'm sure there's some sort of criminal charge involved there but we were young and stupid and I blame the cider.

It was about this time that Cyril and I decided to buy a car so we went fifty for forty pounds on an old 1935 Austin seven. It started life as a Chummy then got converted to a hill climber and then converted back for road use. It was an open "two seater tourer" for want of another description although it's top speed was probably only fifty miles an hour. It had a crash gear box which meant you had to double declutch for every gear change. It did have hood, and it had an MG fuel tank, motor cycle mudguards and a belt to hold the bonnet down. It only had one headlamp on the off side which made it roadworthy by law and a straight through exhaust. It sounded something like a cross between a Ferrari and a tractor.

I eventually bought my share of the car from Cyril after saving up in my POSB (Post Office Savings Book) and had a lot of adventures with it. Unfortunately I was only a provisional driver so had to rely on someone with a full licence before I could go anywhere. I drove it up to Reading and got Dad into it after some effort and he was terrified. One of my trips up there took six months

as the radiator had a leak and even several tins of mustard powder couldn't help and I had to leave it half way up the A4. I got pissed off with it eventually and left it outside the Officers Married Quarters when it broke down.

Now the problem was that it was illegal to own a car during the three years apprenticeship at Locking and after a few months I got called to the guardroom where a local copper had been trying for a long time to trace the ownership of the vehicle and was not a happy bunny.

The punishments for this was 28 days in cells, which meant living in the guardroom sleeping in a cell on a raised platform on the floor. I was allowed to go to classes but spent the rest of the time cleaning the guardroom and making the "Snowdrops" the RAF Police, cups of tea and coffee. This was time well spent because I got to know all the police on first name terms and once the car was up and running I was allowed to park it on camp down by the Boggies, the National Service chap's billets. They had posh proper blocks, with four to a room with central heating.

We had field visits to various wireless stations and outstations such as Greatworth, a transmitter outstation. We met George Burville's dad there who was a Warrant Officer and showed us round the site. This turned out to be my last posting before I got demobbed.

We also went to Bletchley Park the famous wartime secret decoding place where they broke the Enigma code. We had a night out in Bletchley and got thrown out of the cinema for chatting up the local girls. We went for a drink and after several vodka and oranges and some cockles and mussels I was violently

sick. I blamed an allergy to mussels thereafter. This was in the days before Milton Keynes was invented.

One of the traditions in the RAF was to hold a Christmas Billet Bar competition. We were allowed to turn our billets into a seasonal bar before Xmas break up. This was only allowed for the senior entries obviously. This meant we could turn our beds into bunk beds to make more room in the billets for the bar . I got rather drunk one night, in the giggling state and rolled off the top bunk and got up without a scratch, must have been so relaxed I landed in a sort of judo position.

I used to go up to Wookey Hole with some mates where we met some local girl friends and used to go out for tea and cakes. Cheddar was the local tourist spot but our favourite drinking holes were the local pubs around Banwell, Winscombe and Webbington.

The local cost effective rough cider works wonders for a cheap night out but sometimes with disastrous effects. I lost count of the number of pints I'd drunk one evening and had to be carried back to camp and was ceremoniously dumped in the "hole in the hedge". This was our secret way of getting out of camp without passing the guardroom. Unfortunately that night the bloke who dumped me got caught and charged with being drunk and disorderly. I woke up the next morning with a heavy dew on me.

We had to attend a summer camp at Penhale Sands near Newquay which involved war games and night marches. We had the RAF Regiment there to show us how to throw thunder flashes and shoot blanks at the enemy, whoever they were. I think we must have taken sides. Now the real enemy were the Army Junior Leaders who had a camp on the opposite hill from us

and we raided them and pinched their flag and stuck it on the top of our hill alongside our entry flag (another O'Farrell project). We weren't allowed to bring any civies with us, (civilian clothes) to stop us going out at night but we managed to hide them under our overalls and creep out for a night out at Newquay.

There was a lovely little cove with a small cave next to the camp and we eventually became mates with some of the "Pongos" Army lads and had a fireside singsong with them. They weren't the sharpest pencils in the box as they told me about their training and Maths.

"We done logarims and algebras but them decibels was hard where you had to move the dot along" a quote from one of them but we had a jolly evening with them as our last day there. I never fully understood what Junior Leaders were trained to do. You got the feeling they were from underprivileged homes to be used for cannon fodder.

Before we parted our ways after our three years at Locking we had numerous outings together. We had several Jazz outings to festivals in Bridgwater. A party at a local pub in Yatton ended up with a gang of yobos from Bristol picking us off as we rolled out in drunken disorder but the landlady picked up an ornamental bull whip and set about our attackers with relish. I hid behind my guardian Cyril.

I remember going down to Bournemouth with Terry Press and Jack Standen and getting picked upon. Terry was a Squadron boxer but had his arm in a sling and I quietly crept away but one of them chased after me a stood in front of me with both legs apart. An easy target and when he bent over I lost my temper and battered his head. Jack told me a few weeks later that

he had a cracked skull. My hand was a bit sore I can tell you.

Then a trip down to Eastbourne to stay at Chris Anscombe's Auntie's B & B. We met up with a bunch of girls and went to the flix (cinema) where one of them started crying next to me watching some young up and coming pop idol called Jess Conrad, a good looking lad with a nice voice but the acting talent of a brick. I had a tare in my trousers and she offered to mend it for me so we went back to the B & B and I took my trousers off while she did the sewing. In walked the land lady and after adding 2 and 2 together and making 86, threw us out thinking we were having a sex orgy.

There just happened to be a big party down on the beach that night so we all toddled down there and it was going well until some body tied the sewage pump station security guard up. He managed to escape and called the police who scattered us and having nowhere to sleep we crept back to our B & B, crawled up a drainpipe and dossed down there before the land lady awoke.

The Beaulieu Jazz festival was one of the last outings before we parted and Cyril arrived at our house as we set off not before Dad realised we didn't have any money and donated 10 bob to us. We hitch hiked down there and went to the local Montagu Arms pub. We had a half pint of shandy and Cyril welcomed everybody as long lost friends and they all bought us a round. A great night out on the back of half a pint of shandy, and Cyril's cheek.

We met up with more 90<sup>th</sup> and some girls from my old school who had grown up considerably but I could only remember them in pigtails and could kick

myself now for not getting better acquainted. Still on the Gauche Phd course.

The local press were all over us and took a picture of us drinking our half pint of shandy and smoking Wills Woodbines. The picture appeared the next day in the Daily Mail headlined "Booze and drugs hits jazz festival". We found the Daily Mail man the next day and threw him into the river, camera and all.

Then the fire hit the festival and burnt half of it down so we pitched in and helped clean the place up and got free tickets for our efforts. Previously we had to swim from the camp site to the back entrance of the festival holding our clothes up in the air to get in for nothing.

We were considered Beatniks and wore our ban the bomb "Fred", a metal puppet hanging round our necks from a lavatory chain, something we knocked up in the workshops with left over aluminium sheets. The only difference with us and the real Beatniks was our short back and sides. Later on in life I actually went on a ban the bomb march only because there were some cracking looking birds on it.

Then the long journey back so we made it to Southampton where we were getting a lift from one of our lads the next day. I think it was Dick Wharmby (Group Captain as he ended up) in his Rover 75. We didn't have much money left so found a welcoming night cafe and shared a cup of coffee. The owner told us of a empty coach in the car park across the road used by local workers that went every day from 7 in the morning so off we went taking advantage of his kind offer and bedded down only to be rudely awoken the next morning by the workers.

Then four of us all went to Butlins in Phwelli, North Wales. We won the trampolining prize for our "house" and the dance band at night was Rory Storm and the Hurricanes with a certain drummer called Ringo Starr. We met some girls one of whom was the daughter of director of Marconi Electronics who knew more about electronics than I did. Which wasn't difficult.

Our three years at Locking came to an end and we had our final exams and got ready for the Passing Out Parade. This took considerable practice as we had to show the sprogs how good we were as the Senior Entry, a role we had enjoyed during our last six months. The parade involved all the entries and the Station band and the station mascot, Hamish McCrackers the Shetland Pony. We had a big wig take the salute, I think it was the Lord Lieutenant of the county.

My brother Simon came down to see the parade as Mum and Dad couldn't make it. He had a promotion in his Laundry business for a delivery service by Rolls Royce and chauffeur and turned up in a Rolls Royce Landaulet in a Chauffeurs uniform sitting in the open front. He picked me up after the parade and drove round camp with me waving royally in the back. .

I have recently been in touch with some of the 90<sup>th</sup> boys and was told that about 30 were kept back and told to get into uniform and report to the wing offices. All in a hodge podge of dress, no berets, J/T stripes on, some not on, others all creased up. Then marched to the wingco's office and told that the motor vehicles on the camp were illegal. The punishment was 28 days in detention and the sentence was for everybody. Then asked if there were any objections. One lone voice said 'YES SIR', I want to raise a redress of grievance against the Air Commodore.'

You could hear a pin drop. He told him that it was illegal for apprentices to drink even if they were over 18. "The air comm bought me a drink last night and hence committed an offence by encouraging me to drink". We were thrown out and told to wait. When we were called in we were chastised and told to clear off. Thank goodness for barrack room lawyers. Now I couldn't remember much about that but must have been involved as I do remember zooming round the camp in my noisy little green Austin 7 much to everyone's amusement.

We graduated in August 1961 in the rank of Junior Technician and I was in the trade of Ground Wireless Fitter. Other trades were Air Radio, Air Radar, Ground Radar, Ground Radio. About half a dozen passed out as Corporals but we all had our Radio Flashes on our shoulders which designated us as Technicians which meant we got trade pay over and above our normal rank pay.

The grades were A1, A2, B1 and B2. Cyril and myself were B2's and designated to a restricted category of (T) which stood for Transmitters. I don't understand that at all as we all got promoted the same way. Taff Grant was a B1 and was our techie or nerd who knew what it was all about.

There were another half a dozen who only made the rank of SAC (Senior Aircraftsman) but still designated as fitters as opposed to mechanics. Then we got our postings and Cyril, Taff and Pete Locke and I all got posted to RAF Henlow. It was in fact REU (Radio Engineering Unit) and we ended up in RIS (Radio Installation Section). Pete ended up doing greater things ending up as aircrew in Phantoms and Tornados killing people in Iraq.

So we said our farewells to everybody on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1961 at the Winter Gardens Graduation Dinner and Dance and a fantastic era ended which imbued us with a deep sense of camaraderie, making lifelong friends. It is difficult to explain to an outsider how the forces gives you that feeling but even the "Nashers" or National Servicemen and women will agree that it was formed even over a short period of two years and how much it meant to them.

The Ground Wireless 1959 class later to be designated (L.Fitt.GC) Electronic fitters,  
Ground Communications



Paddy O'Farrell, Cliff Jones, Pete Locke, Pete Bergman, Taff Grout,  
George Burville; Mick Walton; George Burwell; Tony Smith; Cyril Gambleton; Eddie Mayfield,  
Colin Campbell; Jim Lampard; Chalky Waite; Mike Thomas; Barry Woodford; Ian Grout.

RAF Locking - Ground Wireless Class (1960)



A more relaxed smaller class with promotion chevrons  
(none for me)

## The real RAF.

Our real lives as grown up airmen now started and we got rid of all our apprentice ship regalia and sewed on our upside down stripe as Junior Technicians. Henlow was situated neat Hitchin and close to the Henlow Beauty Spa. We used to go to the Hermitage Ballroom in Hitchin and occasionally bump into the beauty technicians from the spa.

We were now on the exalted salary of nearly ten pounds a week!

Our first few weeks were pretty sedimentary, getting used to our living quarters. Old wooden billets again with the central pot boilers. Then across the road to the mess and then across the railway line to the hangars and our installation section. We got ready for our next installation project and studied the plans and circuit diagrams and ordered the necessary MT (Motor Transport) required and tools etc and then off we would go to another RAF Station where we were detached as opposed to stationed.

A temporary posting which normally got us off parades etc. While waiting around at Henlow we would start the day with a hearty breakfast in the mess and at eleven o'clock the NAAFI wagon came round and we would have the odd Cornish pasty or two and a mug of hot steaming coffee. Back to the mess for a three course lunch, back to the office and at four o'clock the NAAFI wagon came round again for tea and sticky buns. We would finish work and go back to the mess for another slap up dinner then off into town for a few bevies and end up with a Chinese meal before getting the bus back to camp.

I couldn't play much squash with all the tooing and frooing and now started to realise my full potential. After a year at Henlow I had put on two stones and hit the twelve stone mark.

Our first installation job was at RAF Stanbridge in Leighton Buzzard, or Leighton Buggard as someone wrote to me. Stanbridge was a secret underground Communications Centre and a mixed WRAF and RAF camp. Men and Women. This was where the fun and games started. I managed to get some squash games there and after one match we all returned to the NAAFI. One of our team was the duty officer for that night whose duty was to turf everybody out of the NAAFI, He was Welsh with a sense of humour. The NAAFI had two TV rooms, BBC and ITV and consisted of large leather sofas ideal for young lovers so our Welsh boyo said let's have some fun and see what's happening. So on his command we switched the lights on and caught this young couple in a compromising position.

"And what do you think you're doing boyo?" said our Welsh pal.

"Er, er , necking sir" stuttered our young Romeo.

"Well put your bloody neck back in your trousers!" replied our Duty Officer.

Then one night we got raided. That's our intrepid team, Taff, Pete, Cyril and myself in our barrack room. We were on the ground floor and heard this tap on the window at night. It was a Welsh lady Taff had started a romance with accompanied with three other WRAFs. They climbed through the window and jumped into the respective beds.Pete and Georgina were silently arguing and obviously getting nowhere, Cyril and Taff were silent while I had spent half an hour writhing with my

partner's apparel only to find she was completely flat chested and was wearing falsies. We never spoke a word, then or afterwards and haven't got a clue who she was. Probably just making up the numbers.

Having got rid of the green mean machine my next choice of cars varied from the sublime to the ridiculous. A 1945 Austin 16 wedding taxi, a beautiful car, built so that the groom could stand up inside with his top hat on. It had a Hooper body, with a chrome Hooper name plate. They made Rolls Royce bodies and it had a two tone black finish, matt and gloss.

It had a separate driver's compartment with a megaphone interconnecting for the passengers to give their orders to the chauffeur. Bedford Twill seats with a second folding row of seats in the middle. Pull down blinds on the back windows. Under the driver's seat was a full length tool box lined in green baize. There was a handle for pumping the hydraulic jacks down in the case of a puncture. Twin P 100 headlamps with a mechanical dip switch that made a great big clunk when operated. It was enormous and some jokers said that the next station dance would be held in the back of Paddy's hearse. It looked like a hearse.

I bought this from honest Uncle Harry at Camden Motors. He was the archetypal second hand car sales man in a camel hair coat with a trilby. I paid fifty pounds for it on Hire Purchase.

I got stopped by the police one night returning from a bash with ten passengers and when he saw my provisional licence asked for somebody with a full licence. I pulled the portion window back and enquired for one. Alas there was nobody and so I got charged with driving unaccompanied!

At Easter I had a cracking date with a blonde but got called up for guard duty at the USAF Wethersfield base for the weekend during the ban the bomb marches. It was freezing cold, we had to sleep in our 3 ton trucks and only armed with rounders bats. We were allowed a ration of Navy Rum now and then but god forbid any marcher who got through the fence because would have killed them. We arrived back on camp only to find my date had been pinched by a bloody Snowdrop!

We "kidnapped" a WRAF one night and went for a five hour round trip drive in Pete's Ford Zephyr Six up to a transport cafe on the A1 near Newcastle just for a bacon butty. The poor girl still had her bedroom slippers on but took it all in good fun.

Or we would go into "Town", London for a night out. We were young and confident, cocky is probably a better word. We went out one night with "Inch" and Brian Bushnel, both RAF boxers. Inch who was five feet six was a bantam weight while Brian was probably a middle weight. We followed this old biddy down the Edgware road for several miles. She was in a Morris Minor with her illuminated indicator sticking out. Every now and then she would veer off to the right as if she really meant to turn right but we eventually overtook her but cut her off and Inch jumped out and went over to her and asked her if she was going to turn right. "Why no young man" she replied. "Well, you won't want this fucking thing then will you? " and promptly tore off the indicator.

Inch and Brian went into a clip joint in Soho and were none too happy for paying a tenner for half a pint of beer so they turned the place over. We had to make a swift exit back to camp.

We would think nothing of going down to Luigis in the West End for our hair cuts, just off Shaftesbury Avenue for a cut and singe. Then pop into Gieves the Gentlemen's Outfitters for "clobber".

We actually had to work now and then with engineers from the Post Office, British Telecom as it is now known, installing miles of cabling down long dark underground staircases into rooms full of clattering teleprinters and punched hole paper feeding machines.

We finished the job at Stanbridge and went back to Henlow for our next project and got sent up to Wick, next to John O'Groats. We got the train and disembarked and walked through the town with everybody marvelling at the new strangers. The old RAF Station had long gone so we had to stay in digs. We got lots of allowances for board and lodging and found a nice little cost effective B & B run by Addy and Ella. He ran the bicycle shop in town and we settled in. It only took a few days before everybody knew who we were and were duly greeted on a first name basis as we walked through the town.

We had to sort out a problem with a beacon. The porcelain insulators carrying the aerial feed wires from the transmitter to the aerial farm were melting. They were a good six inches thick and about two foot long with the wire running through the centre of them.

Now this is one of two occasions when I actually used my training and my brain on a technical problem. I eventually worked out that the frequency of the transmitter was at odds with the wavelength of the aerial using the old inversely proportional of lambda against frequency theorem. So we had to call out our aerial riggers to change the size of the aerial and job

done. It was hard to believe that this was the problem of melting great chunks of porcelain.

We spent many happy days in Wick as Addy would take us out to his pub and teach us how to drink whisky. He would then carry me back home. The people were so friendly and we had to return there on another job but with a different crew. We drove up this time and stayed in the chief of Police's house in Inverness on the way up. We arrived at Wick and I went straight to the digs we used before, took the key from under the doormat and marched in. Our newcomers asked if we had booked and when I told them we hadn't, they refused to go into the house as they said we were breaking and entering and stayed outside. I went down to Addy's bike shop who welcomed us with open arms and asked if we already had the tea on !

We stumbled on a private party one night on a local pub crawl with everyone in full Scottish regalia and were dragged in and introduced to the *eightsome reel* and *strip the willow* and wined and dined in royal fashion.

I took a local barmaid out for a walk along the cliffs and fell and banged my head on some rocks and was unconscious for short time and she was long gone when I got up, left me for dead.

So we finished that job, returned to Henlow and had other detachments locally: RAF Ruislip where I took a WRAF out to the 100 Jazz club in Oxford Street to see Lionel Hampton but she wasn't impressed. Then RAF / USAF Chicksands. They had this enormous round aerial like a big flat gassometer for submarine communications.

Then this job in Hong Kong came up. I filled out a form for a passport, sent it away but got a call asking me to come down to London for an appointment in Petty France Lane. I arrived and went to reception only to be greeted by "Oh, you're O'Farrell. You don't look much like a china man to me!" They very kindly allowed me to go on a provisional passport and get more details of my father's birth whilst I was there.

So, where were we? Oh, yes, Taff, Cyril and I along with a poor nasher arrived after a 16 hour flight in a Britannia via Istanbul and Bangkok. We dumped our stuff in transit accommodation and rushed out of the gates at Kai Tak into the squalor of a local urbanisation with 22 storey apartments, each holding a family together with chickens and pigs and not a bright light in sight. We made it to a dark and dismal walled place with a funny smell which we later found out was the old walled City, the centre of the White Russian hashish trading. Talk about innocents abroad, not even the police went there unless in armoured trucks, so we gaily blundered on until a friendly taxi driver asked if we wanted to go to the bars and off we set.

Now there was a street in Kowloon with 23 odd bars, I think it was Cameron Road and the challenge was to have a pint in every one. So we settled in at last and quenched our thirst. I don't think we made it past the first half dozen.

Our installation job was on top of a mountain called Tai Mo Shan. Lion mountain, which overlooked the Chinese border and had a series of hairpin bends to get to the top. Work started early in the cool of the day so we had to leave camp at about six o'clock in the morning and worked through until three in the afternoon. It was a radar installation and very hush hush. We had to sign the Official Secrets Act before

coming out. You had to laugh watching the Chinese Air Force sending their Mig fighters over for reconnaissance at ten o'clock every morning and at quarter past ten the jolly old RAF sent their ancient venomous Venoms out to scare them away which they hoped had already left.

When you get posted abroad you get overseas allowance added to your pay. At this time we were getting 16 Hong Kong dollars to the pound so we felt like millionaires, well poor millionaires and lived life accordingly. We would go out at night and get back sometime early in the morning in time for a shower and a mess breakfast before catching the bus up to Tai Mo Shan for work. The ride up there was not the best thing to do after a night out on the piss and invariably ended up in a sick bag. But we persevered. After work we would eat then go to bed in time to get up for a shit, shower and shave and another night on the tiles. We invariably ran out of money but with the help of 23 pawn shops in Kowloon could sustain our enjoyment. We got issued with new foam mattresses which could raise considerable capital even though you got some strange looks from the other passengers on the bus.

Now the trick was to find a bar to use on a regular basis when you could then get tick and pay the bill at the end of every week. You had to work out when you got posted back to blighty to make a clear profit out of this. We settled on a nice little bar in Kowloon run by the Mama-san Norma, who looked after her girls as well as her customers. Norma looked after us like a mother and Cyril fell in love with one of the girls there, I think her name was Lilian.

I had met what the lads on camp called "white trash" lady. We saw an ad for a birthday party at the Union Church Club in Kowloon at a posh hotel and charged on in like you do. I sat next to this lovely girl

who was in the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps and I walked her home with her boyfriend. Her name was Judy Parfitt and she came from Bracknell just up the road from Reading. She had a hectic social life in between the Royal Navy officer's and the US Navy parties in the officers clubs on the island of Victoria. I don't quite know how we hit it off, she probably wanted a bit of rough, but she showed me the night life of Hong Kong and even came with us to our friendly bar where she got on like a house on fire with the local bar girls.

The Twist was the in thing at the time and a Peppermint lounge night club was opened up and Judy also took me to another very romantic night club where the only lights were small inter rotating orbs with pin pricks for lights on the tables. I was hooked as she talked about marriage and I sat there sweating.

I kept trying to lose my virginity with her but she was having none of it until the subject of marriage came up which scared the shit out of me. When I went back to blighty she put me in touch with her sister who was a right little raver. So life in Hong Kong carried on. We got our suits made at a friendly Indian tailor just off Nathan Road which involved several fittings and several free drinks per visit. This tradition was carried on even after we had bought our suits. It was always the start of a good night out on the piss and invariably involved watching our tailor take the mickey out of a poor American tourist.

The northern part of Nathan road lead out to the new territories and the Chinese part of town while the posh European style restaurants, bars etc were down towards the harbour. We went up to the Chinese end to try out their food and ended up on a bare wooden table complete with knife marks eating boiled cabbage water and boiled rice and cabbage. We were the only

Europeans there much to the delight of the locals who showed us how to eat rice properly and I became the Nathan Road rice gobbling champion that night.

The cinemas had English films with sub titles in Chinese which was weird as the Chinese audience laughed at totally different parts of the film than we did. We all went over to Victoria Island with Taff and bought a super duper electric guitar in Tommy Lee's Piano shop and started up a small skiffle cum rock group. We were allowed to practice in the RAF Yacht Club, I was on the tea chest and on occasions Cyril and I "fronted" the band on vocals. This needed a considerable amount of Dutch courage before hand and we both got into my big woolly jumper for our performance for some strange reason. Our version of "Be-Bop-A-Lula" went down well enough though.

We would practice or rather Taff would serenade the girls in our bar and Norma, our Mama San, ever the thoughtful mother decided that Taff, or "Tar Fee", as she called him, needed a girl and so she organised one for him complete with an apartment. She was a belter and Taff was completely oblivious to his good fortune. She would buy him clothes and then make him parade them in front of her parents, even in pyjamas!

I wish I had a mother like her!

We went up to the New Territories near the border where the bar girls were trained and it was an enlightening experience. The "bars" all had crucifixes on the walls and were spotlessly clean. No hanky panky was allowed but the girls were just so friendly and delightfully charming a refreshing change from the "you want jig a jig Johnny?" syndrome.

We did the usual tourists trips over to Stanley Bay beach, the Tiger Balm Gardens, Aberdeen Harbour with all the floating restaurants and of course you just had to pay to go and see Susie Wong, who must have been 90 if she was a day. I doubt very much of it was the real Susie Wong.

We learnt the art of bartering and had some real rip offs and real bargains. Cyril saw this lovely suede coat in a shop and just had to have a look at it. They dragged him in and the price started at 200 HK dollars. Poor Cyril only had 20 dollars on him and dragged himself back out but was dragged back in and out again and eventually he got the coat for 20 dollars. I bought a pack of 6 "Hings" underpants on the market. "Hings" was a quite well known local rand but I was well pissed off when I opened them to find only two pairs of gents Y Fronts with four pairs of ladies knickers in the middle of the pack.

Then there was the night out when Cyril got rather drunk and having always bragged that he wanted a tattoo of our 90th Entry mascot, the tiger, was manoeuvred into a tattoo parlour. He couldn't stop laughing as this machine tickled him to death and we all just fell about laughing as well. My jaws ached when we managed to crawl out with poor Cyril complete with bandaged chest.

We briefly sauntered into the Peninsular Hotel for a beer but made a hasty retreat when told the price. We would get the Star Ferry over to Victoria Island and the Seaman's Mission at Wanchai being our normal drinking hole when not with Norma and the girls.

The sleeping quarters only had one large fan so everybody moved their beds as close underneath the fan as possible then the Shit Beetles would fly into the

billet and you would hear their monotonous buzzing until there was a loud clang as they hit the fan. Being amour plated it just bounced off and then you waited until you heard the scraping noise of it trying to gather speed for a take off. Another Clang as everybody ducked until a brave soul got out of bed and chucked it out. You could jump on it and it didn't make a dent or harm it.

So we were in this NAAFI and started this game of bridge. It's just like whist but with bidding. That's easy to say as it gets a bit more complicated than that, so you have to have some sort of code to tell your partner what you have in your hand so as to come to an agreement and a contract. So this Chinese couple starts bidding hearts up to the slam level, which means they can only afford to lose one trick. I didn't have enough card points to do any bidding but I had a fistful of hearts so I can't see how the hell they can make a contract with hearts as trumps and so I doubled for penalty. They promptly changed suit and made the contract worth two cups of NAAFI tea.

It was then that I realised the meaning of conventional bidding. So you have to have a system cum convention that gives as much information as possible. So their bids of hearts meant nothing to do with hearts but let's say showed the point count of their respective hands. Once you know how many card points you have between you, you have a pretty good idea as to the level of your bidding.

Eventually we completed our project and had to return to Blighty. This took three weeks, a long flight in an ancient RAF Hastings to Singapore in old WW2 aircraft with metal bucket seats for paras and you weren't allowed to smoke. We were billeted in the transit billets in Changi which were the old prison huts

used by the Japanese and still had the graffiti and scratching on the walls. We got mixed up with some Army lads in the Irish Guards who led us astray and we soon ran out of money. We went on a begging errand to Pay Accounts and they allowed us to take out Advances in Pay until we returned to the UK. I had pawned all my Chinese presents I bought in Hong Kong for Mum and Dad so this saved our bacon. We got taken into town to the UJ Club (Union Jack Club) run by the NAAFI with duty free booze. Our Irish colleagues got rather drunk one night and threw some Military Policemen into the central pool. We knew how to enjoy ourselves!

We were introduced into the local cuisine in Bugis Street and to the "Ladyboys". Some of the visiting touring Rugby Club boys ended up waking up to find a wig on the pillow beside them. We would go down to Telepaku beach and have Cheese Rotis and a glass of Olvatine and of course taste our first curry. Cyril tried a whole chile pepper and drunk a whole fire bucket of water when we got back to the billets. Eventually they found a flight for us to get back home and first stop was Ghan. A small island in the Maldives used as a staging post and communications relay point. It was a one year unaccompanied posting there with only one woman, the NAAFI Manageress. We spent a few hours their and then on to Bombay. As we got off the plane I said to Cyril "have you farted?" what a stinking place. Next stop El Alemain in Libya another hot hole and at long last Heathrow and a glass of fresh milk and some tomato juice. Things we yearned for in the Far East.

Back at Henlow I picked up my mail with a "Dear John" letter from Bridget. The joys of a world traveller! Fortunately I had Judy's sisters contact details. My parents were enjoying life in the school Gatehouse in Eversley with a garden and I would pop down there now and then. After my Hong Kong adventure I took them

out for a Chinese meal in Reading and showed off my Cantonese linguistic skills. Well, the waiter wouldn't leave my side for the whole meal.

I went into Reading one night to go to the dance at the Top Rank ballroom. I stopped off at a pub and got chatting to someone and before I knew it I was rather inebriated but managed to find my way to the dance hall and staggered in and bumped into somebody and asked them for a dance. The next thing I know is being woken up in a Mini outside our house by very attractive young lady.

The next day she arrived and took me off to a posh country club overlooking a lake. I think I was posted off to another job and never saw her again. However I did contact Judy's sister eventually and got the train the next time I was in Reading to Bracknell to meet her. She was a right little party girl and her and her pal and an Italian waiter and I would be off partying in his little Mini. She was a good little jiver and we managed to get through to the finals of the Top Rank Jive competition. I had abandoned the "hearse" at Stanbridge and started having driving lessons in a bloody awful Vauxhall Wyvern.

But of course I then have to go on another project, back to Bonnie Scotland to RAF Pitreovie Castle. Another underground secret communications centre near Dunfermline in Fife. We worked with the Navy on this project and we left one of our soldering irons on after work and a Chief Petty Officer sat on it ruining his best uniform. We got an earful the next day.

I was working with Jock Forsyth who lived the other side of Edinburgh and used to stay with him at weekends. His father's claim to fame was coming second in a talent contest with Kenneth McKellar. The

daughter Andrea and I hit if off although she thought at first I was a Roman Catholic with an Irish name. The family was Protestant through and through and we'd go on Orange Walks.

The job included some work at the transmitting outstation called Balado Bridge, in Kinross. We stayed in a local pub there, three of us sharing a bed in Mrs Mackay's pub. It was exceeding cost effective with all the allowances we got and her steaks were something else.

Then the kind RAF sent me on a driving course at RAF Worton near Blackpool. We had lessons on the old airport runways in a Standard Ensign, another bloody awful car with stick column change. This was quite an extensive course similar to an advanced driving course.

We would go off to Blackpool to the Tower Ballroom dances. I was back a camp one day when I got a call to go to the guardroom. Oh Shit I thought, what the hell have I done now? When I got there it was a young lady that I'd danced with enquiring if I would be coming out that night with her? I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.

I had my twenty first birthday while there but went back to Scotland and had a party with Andrea and her family. We went out to a local pub then came back to her house and partied with the local police who stayed until four o'clock in the morning.

Then back to Worton to finish the driving course and I had to take a civilian driving test in Blackpool at the August Bank Holiday weekend. The traffic was manic but I got through ok and then we had to finish the course on motorways and night driving which never happened on normal driving lessons.

Then Cyril and myself got sent back down to Locking on a "CON G" course, whatever that was. I think it had something to do with the fact that we passed out from Locking we had a restricted grade so they wanted to upgrade us. I don't remember much about the course only that we retraced our steps in Weston and had a good time. I stayed down for the Christmas break having been invited to lunch by a local lad. The camp closed down so with nowhere to stay I crept back to camp through the hole in the hedge and managed to open a window in our barrack block and stayed there. There was no electricity or central heating but it was very cost effective.

Everybody returned after the break and back in the class Cyril and I got called into the Station Commander's office. "Oh shit" we thought, "What the hell have we done wrong now?" So we stood rigidly to attention in front of this chap with rows of medals and scrambled egg all over his peaked hat as he announced that we had been promoted to Corporal. We both tried but failed to suppress a wide grin which he found a little disconcerting but we saluted, gave our thanks and beat a hasty retreat falling over outside his office in fits of laughter and a great sigh of relief. We were now on a massive salary of ten pounds a week!

We went back to Henlow and finished a few more jobs travelling up to Scotland and back. We had some good nights out locally in Hitchin. We went to the Hermitage ballroom there and sometimes got a train to Stevenage and went to the Locarno ballroom there. Our favourite tipple before venturing on to the dance floor was a Black Velvet. Guinness and champagne but in our case Mackeson and cider. It worked wonders and after a couple of those we were ready to take on the world. I think we were fighting a losing battle.

So our tour of Henlow came to an end after two years and we got our next postings. Here we parted ways and I got a posting to Eastleigh. Where the bloody hell was Eastleigh? I knew of one down near Southampton but upon further investigation found out that I was going off to darkest Africa. Kenya. I couldn't believe my luck.

## **Kenya**

I arrived just after "Uhuru", independence in October 1963 when Jomo Kenyatta took over the reins from the British waving his fly whisk about shouting "Harambee!". I got put in a land rover and driven off into the bush some twenty miles out of Nairobi to RAF Ruiru. This was a communications transmitter outstation and for obvious reasons of interference with local TV in the middle of nowhere. There were two small wooden barracks, twenty beds, a mess and kitchen building, a guardroom a generator building and a bloody great "T" shaped hall with all the transmitters and associated line equipment. At the end of the building was a large semi circular hall serving as a bar and dance hall or recreational hall with a snooker table and table tennis and the occasional snake. This was in the middle of a large aerial farm full of rhombics and dipoles and Yagi arrays with feeder wires running out to each aerial. This was all fenced in around about a dozen acres.

There was an officer in charge, a Flight Sergeant and a Sergeant for each watch which had half a dozen men. Then there were the Techies, the day watch who worked from 8 till 3 keeping everything running smoothly. An administration team and some Snowdrops to look after our security. There were LOPs and LIPs: Living Out Personnel and Living In Personnel. The LOPs lived in married quarters close to Eastleigh the main RAF camp and airfield which later became Nairobi International Airport.

Like most overseas camps the labour was cheap and we had our own Dhobi Boys. Ours had flat feet, his arches being taken out by the Mau Mau for collaborating with the white bwana mkubwas. I asked him to wash only things that were on the left of my bed and of

course he starched everything including our underwear. So after a night on the beer I would wake finding half my clothing gone to the laundry and get one sock washed. We had mosquito nets and it was normal to keep the odd chameleon or praying Mantis in them to eat the mosquitoes. You could hear the praying mantis crunching up their finds and on one occasion one of our lads squashed his chameleon who fell into his bed while he was sleeping. One bloke had a pet snake and put it up my shorts one afternoon during my siesta. I chased him into the bush and we must have run a good 10,000 metres before I caught him up and nearly strangled him.



Inside of the transmitting hall at RAF Ruiru



RAF Ruiru transmitting outstation  
and aerial farm, Kenya 1963



861 Corporal O'Farrell in KD, (Khaki Drill)

We were a compact and happy bunch who mostly managed to escape the parades and square bashing at the main camp. There was a daily run in the camp Land Rover to Eastleigh to collect the stores: mail and food for us. Unfortunately there was a brewery half way between us and the main camp. This was the "White

Cap" brewery run mostly by Brits and they had a tasting room up on the top balcony. An enormous fridge ready for samples to be tested and obviously we were ideal for this. So our Land Rover got detoured in on its return and would be seen swerving down our track late in the day with everybody waiting to be fed.

Our nearest town was Riuru a small industrial town about three miles down the road to Nairobi. When I say road, I mean a red dirt murum road. There were no tarmac roads outside the environs of Nairobi. Further up country was Thika a larger town but with a country club. It gained notoriety through the film "The Flame Trees of Thika".

Our camp was situated in the coffee farming belt and we had a good social relationship with most of the farm managers who were single and would enjoy the benefits of our duty free booze. We got invited to all their parties which never started until we got there with an ample supply of beer and spirits. I started playing squash with some of them at the Thika Country Club and eventually played rugby for them, the Thika Kudus. I would normally have to play for the RAF Eastleigh team but their social life bared no comparison to that at Thika. Our team was always bottom of the league but the most popular for the visiting teams from Nairobi because of the Après Match socials.

We used to have some great barbecue evenings on camp and I was prompted to run one. Having kept in touch with the local brewery I found out that they had a small band that they offered as a publicity act which cost ten percent of the gate fee. I forgot to mention that all our social functions were free. However they turned up and took advantage of our duty free booze as well. I was playing rugby up at Thika prior to the evening having obtained a whole sheep for the price of

a bottle of brandy from one of our friendly farmers.  
Nineteen shillings!

The visiting team were from HMS Tiger who were on shore leave from their patrol duties embagoing Ian Smith's Rhodesian UDI take over. We finished the match, had a few drinks and I suggested that they came back to our barbeque. Well, that was a night to remember, or forget as our Naval chums got well and truly plastered and one of them did a forward roll through the big bass drum of our visiting band. We had a few spare beds as some of us were on night shift duty so we put our sailor pals up for the night. We gave them a breakfast the next morning and I drove them back to Nairobi for their next match.

It was a few weeks later that I got called into the Commanding Officer's office, marched in, saluted, took my hat off thinking I was going to be on a "fizzer" and the CO read a letter out to me. It was from the Captain, Commander of HMS Tiger, addressed to the Commanding Officer of RAF Ruiru, with a message "Dear Paddy, many thanks for looking after our lads on their rugby tour."

"I didn't realise you had been promoted Corporal O'Farrell?" Laughed our CO !

Carrying on with the Xmas Billet Bar competition we built one in the large dome at the end of the hall that was used as a dance hall and I painted a 180 degree mural around the walls of the typical African scenery. Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro with deserts and bush in between. It was illuminated behind a bamboo fence giving the feeling of looking out over the countryside from your veranda. We would have got first prize but were disqualified as it was a permanent fixture. I did a portrait of everybody as they arrived and

hung them around the bar walls and they took it home with them when they got posted back to Blighty.

Our social life was extremely hectic. Once you met some ex Pats their friends would grab you for another party and so on ad infinitum. I got asked to look after somebody's B & B while they were on holiday and then I got asked to be an agent for Avon tyres. I did calligraphy for a well know safari company, Kerr Downy and Selby. They wanted a special award certificate done on vellum for the "One Hundred Pounder Club" for those who had shot an elephant with both tusks weighing over one hundred pounds each. It used gold leaf and some considerable calligraphy skills but I got paid ten pounds for each parchment. Ten pounds! For ten pounds you could get stinking drunk, have a good meal with a good woman thrown in!

I bought a 1955 Rover 75 a bit of luxury with a fluid flywheel, whatever that was. It was described as a semi automatic gear box, and it lasted me the three years while I was there and covered a lot of miles.

There was a Land Rover set aside at Eastleigh for the families use which you could book and we used that several times to go on Safari. First to the Nairobi National Park and then to Amboseli down on the border with Tanganyika, or Tanzania as it was now called once Neyere got Independence with adjoining Zanzibar. You could see Kilimanjaro along with some stunning wild life. Unfortunately on our way back our windscreen shattered and we got frozen to death driving back.

I had many other excursions in the Rover, going up to the lakes at Nakuru and Naivasha with the stunning sights of millions of flamingos. Nakuru also had some motor racing events up there, nothing like

formula one, just the locals in their Porsches or Lotus sports cars but a good day out none the less.

Then there was the East African Safari Rally every Easter and I went along with a family in their Austin Cambridge as a radio marshal out in the middle of nowhere in a radio tent booking in the drivers after each stage. That was in the days when the Peugeot 404s won everything. Ford eventually beat them with the introduction of their Cortinas. But it very interesting especially when the big American Ford Comets came thundering in leaving a cloud of smoke behind them. You could hear them coming a mile away.

One of the local garage owners I'd met entered but couldn't compete against the big factory set ups like Ford or Peugeot. There was another local lad, Joginder Singh who did quite well in his Volvo PV 544. The Peugeot 404s were everywhere, especially the estates who could hold 8 and probably a few more in the local taxis. I did eventually managed to own one but six years later in Cyprus.

A pal and I drove down to Mombasa which was a three hundred mile drive on murram roads, no tarmac. It took about six hours and we were covered from head to foot in red dust by the time we arrived. There was a forces holiday camp there called White Sands. A favourite holiday place for all the Middle East camps such as Aden, Bahrain etc. But you couldn't walk on the sands because they were so hot, you had to make a mad dash into the azure Indian Ocean. We had a great time down there with all the bars and restaurants but ran out of money so my mate got a travel warrant back to Nairobi and our camp to borrow money and returned.

While he was away I bumped into the famous author Paul Theroux with a girl friend and another

mate. He was in the middle of one of his famous railway journeys and asked me to drive him around for some local knowledge. I don't think I got a mention in any of his books although I did contact him years later when I started writing and got a nice reply.



Paul Theroux (centre) on the beach in Mombasa 1965

Our journey back was eventful as the petrol tank hit a rock and developed a leak. We waited several hours for a passing motorist who went ahead and asked someone to come back and help us. He arrived and gave me a bar of Sunlight Soap. I did a double take but was shown how this could stop petrol leaks when applied to the hole. I think I carried that bar around for the next few years. I did eventually save up enough money to get it repaired, but obviously the beer fund had priority.

The murum roads developed little ripples but if you drove on the wrong side of the road you would get a much smoother ride. So you would be on the wrong side of the road and upon seeing another car coming towards you, change back, pass each other and swap back to the other side again. There was the occasional dry river bed to cross but other than that it was a fairly boring drive apart from the occasional elephant wandering across. There was a rumour that a drunken Mercedes driver had done the trip in three hours. I have me doubts!

There was an inter section shield competition with every section competing in as many activities as possible. Ruiru was counted as a section and we did very well, I can't remember if we won but everybody played their hearts and souls out. I was in the basket ball team, hockey, tug of war, athletics and I put m name down for diving.

We used to drive down the Nairobi road and go swimming in the Spread Eagle Hotel, a sort of transit place for all the forces families. We paid an entrance fee and gave our audience some entertainment with all our fun and frolics on the diving board. So I was disappointed to find out the diving had been cancelled for the Shield competition through lack of entries. A few months later I got a phone call from the person organising the Joint Forces Middle East diving competition. He had noted my entry for the Shield competition and asked if I would help him out as the RAF were short of numbers.

I duly agreed and turned up only to see a bloody great ten metre diving board. I explained that I had never done anything higher than five feet let alone ten metres. "Don't worry lad just do the two and three metre stuff." So I did my stuff, nothing exciting but I

got a round of applause even though I was last as expected. Then one of the officials came over and told me I was first on the ten metre dive. I explained my predicaments, don't worry old boy it's a piece of cake. I got to the top of the diving platform, I daren't look down and just threw myself off in swallow sort of dive. I got a round of applause and crept away with a sore head. I came last as usual but a hand shake from the RAF boss and a round of tea and sandwiches afterwards and a good laugh. So I can say I represented the Royal Air Force in the Middle East Command championships, just like old days in my hurdles for the New Forest Schools championship.

My mate Tony who worked at Kahawa, the receiving outstation was a show jumper and asked me to tow his horse box for him to some of the events. He found some stables just outside at Karen, a district of Nairobi named after Karen Blitzenburgh, the famous lady in Out Of Africa. So while he was mucking about on his horses I helped this old major Dudley, a retired Kenyan Army Officer who was converting an old house into a Country Club. This partnership continued as the Club started up and I helped him run the bar. We then progressed into outside catering for the County Shows and I did the food as well as looking after Tony's horses while he was in the show jumping event.

My old mate Dave Bullock from the 90<sup>th</sup> at Locking turned up. He had transferred to Aircrew duties as a Load Master and was coming into Eastleigh on the oil run down to Lusaka in Zambia during the Rhodesia embargo crisis. So I picked him and his aircrew and took them out to my country Club, now named the Ngong Hills Country Club. We all got horribly drunk and I drove them back to camp scaring the shit out of them on the dirt track roads.

Dave had organised a jolly for me to join him on a flight down to Lusaka and so with a very sore head the next day I was duly organised for the flight and sat down amongst several large oil drums in this Britannia, given some head phones and off we went. The conversation from the cockpit started as "John, you bastard wake up. It's your turn to take off". We were taxiing towards the runway by this time. "Come on John, for Christ's sake get a grip!" We were now on the runway and accelerating. I was starting to feel damp patches in my underwear by this time. We must have been half way down the runway when the intercom squawked. "For fucks sake John are you going to get this thing off the ground or not!" we were nearly at the end of the runway as I was looking round for the nearest toilet or prayer mat. Then we took off and Dave came back with a big grin on his face. "You bastard " it was my turn to do the shouting.

We landed at Lusaka, got rid of the drums and returned to Nairobi. As we were walking off the plane, I noticed a group of people with a big black car and went over for a nosey. I pushed my way through a queue of people only to have my hand shaken by none other than Robert Kennedy. Must have thought I was part of the welcoming committee.

I said my farewells to Dave, only to learn later that he was killed in an air sea rescue operation in rough seas. However this fuelled my appetite for aircrew duties and I signed the application form. The Station Commander authorised it and I heard him say afterwards that it might quieten me down a bit.

All this working at the Ngong Hills Country club and other jobs on the side made me late for work or even miss my shift some times. This didn't help my application to aircrew so it didn't progress any further

so my next trick was to apply to be bought out of the RAF. I had been offered a job by IBM here in Kenya but they said that they wanted their money's worth out of me. Not very often I get thought of as precious.

Kenya is a beautiful country with the deserts to the northern borders with Somalia and Ethiopia, the stunning beaches along the western coast at Mombasa and Malindi and the snow covered icy peaks of Mount Kenya to the North and to the East on the borders with Uganda and Sudan. Then the mighty Rift valley cuts through the country with drops of a thousand feet. Nairobi is on a plateau at five thousand feet close to the equator. If you lived to the south of the equator the water would go down the plug hole anti clockwise and if in the north, clockwise. Now there was a pub actually straddling the equator and you could see the different currents in bathrooms situated on either side of the equator.

Some of the LOP's, families, took pity on us poor LIPs and took us under their wings. I went up to stay with a family when they rented a hunting lodge at Nyeri close to Mount Kenya for a weekend in the cooler climate looking at the snow and the forests with little streams, just like Scotland, on a good day that is!

Then there was the rugby festival up at Eldoret. A three hours drive to the rugby club, I arrived with my kit and somebody asked me what position I normally played. "front row" says I. I was now fourteen stone of solid flab, but you should see the thighs! "Ok so we'll put you out on the wing then. You'll be playing for the Presidents XI." So off I go and get changed, ran around the pitch for eighty minutes then down to the nitty gritty of a damn good piss up. I woke up the next morning staring at a pig. I had been put up with a

forest ranger in his little hut in the middle of a forest with his pet pig.

There were several touring rugby teams visiting East Africa who came up to Thika. The one I remember was the "Anti Assassins" from Preston, a sort of old boys get together. They taught me all my "action" jokes. These were comic acts which sometimes involved somebody else as some sort of stage prop. "Hardy and Nelson" was my favourite which involved running back and forth like a lunatic acting the dual roles on board HMS Victory. Then there was the Indian story teller explaining English Cricket. The raw recruit with long eyesight on the rifle range and the Duck Shoot. They were all barrack room humour but great fun after a rugby match.

There was one that involved a stooge who had to act out total paralysis after a scene where you had to blindfold the participant and lay him on the floor then lift both legs up and after considerable mumbo jumbo let the legs down as the stooge tried in vain to stand and had to be lifted on to a chair and was revived within seconds. There's always one! Always a sucker who reckons it can't be done to him and so the procedure is repeated until both legs are up in the air and a glass of water is poured down his trousers. That's always good for a laugh apart from the poor bloke with soggy pants!

Now the duck shoot is a little vulgar requiring a broom and a toilet roll and when Fay saw this some years later she said she would divorce me if I ever did that again in her company.

The Eldoret trip was on the road up to Uganda which a pal and I tried later on just for something to do. We slept in the car and made it as far as Kampala, stopping on the way at Jinja on the banks of Lake

Victoria. We pulled into what looked like a lay-by in the night and woke up with hundreds of snotty nosed kids looking at us. We were in the middle of an industrial estate. We stopped on the Equator for the obligatory photo shoot on the way.

I was still working at the Country Club time permitting, which was now becoming fashionable and we would get all the local politicians visiting us such as Tom Mboya and his beautiful American wife. He was later assassinated being in the wrong tribe and in opposition to Jomo and his Kikuyu pals. There was a lovely spinster who would grace us with her presence and she took a shine to me in a motherly sort of way and she had a teenage daughter who she felt was safe in my company. Little did she know!

Major Dudley had a crush on the lady but she spurned him. She lived in the guest wing of Roschילד's mansion in Karen and asked me to house sit for her when she went away. She had a pedigree poodle bitch which needed to be kept in. I came back one night from the club and stupidly walked across the lawn not the path. That was when the Safari ants found me. They were as big as your thumb and went straight for the hottest part of your body. By the time I reached the front door I had thrown off all my clothes, ran straight inside and jumped into the bath. The bloody dog escaped and stayed out all night creeping back home in the morning looking very bedraggled, probably been sired by a lion. I had to break the news to my lady friend who was none too chuffed about it but I think she had to have the dog seen to in the end.

We had started a drag hunt at the club which was very popular. It was just like a hunt in the UK but the fox was a bag of butcher's leftovers taken round the country side by some athletic volunteer. I would have to

serve everyone with the traditional glass of sherry before they went off and then the bar would go mad afterwards.

We had some characters in the club. One in particular was a retired Irishman Captain who was in the Kenyan Army and an inveterate roué, famous for chasing the girls. He was a good looking man for a sixty year old and I will always remember him in full flow with a prospective lady and his voice could be heard above everyone else when the bar suddenly went quiet : "horses, aircraft and women you always mount on the left!" (Read my book "Primrose Cottage")

I met a extremely beautiful black South African lady who was part of a cabaret show act about the dustbin men. In South Africa the dust bin men all sing and dance on the job and she was the star of the show, her name was Gypsy Rose some body or other taking after the famous US burlesque lady Gypsy Rose Lee. I used to pick her up at the night club in my working KD (Khaki Drill) uniform while everybody else was in full evening wear, tuxedos etc. Still on my PhD in Gauche. But she must have liked a bit of rough. I'd take her to the drive in movies or go for a drink in one of the local bars cum night clubs. Not surprisingly this romance didn't last long, she ended up marrying a hotel owner down the coast in Malindi.

Going to the cinema in Nairobi was a social event where you wore evening dress or at least a collar and tie. There was a large mezzanine level lounge in the cinema where everybody congregated for drinks before the show and afterwards as well. I watched Michael Caine in the film "the Ipcress File" there and was overawed by the sexy heroin when she asked him if ever took his glasses off. "Only when I go to bed

darling" says he. Whereupon she slowly seductively takes his glasses off.

Well, that did it for me. Straight round to the nearest optician. I'm still waiting for a young nymphomaniac to ask me if I ever take my glasses off to this day! What with this and all the other odd jobs and the rugby playing and social implications I was rather busy and sometimes forgot to go to work. The RAF took a dim view of this and set up a summary Court Marital. Holy shit I thought but I managed to get away with a severe "dig", that's a severe reprimand which just meant a week's loss of pay and a good talking to. So I kept my Corporals stripes.

It was a strange coincidence that after my trials and tribulations there was a dire shortage of Ground Wireless Fitters with experience in transmitters and especially a single airman wanted to cover a shortage in the Middle East and I found myself detached to Aden to help out there, so I was given a bunch of air travel forms and sent off to the sunny climes of the South Yemen. Now Mad Mitch was there then with the Black Watch kicking the shit out of the fuzzy wuzzies so they didn't take too kindly to us and wanted us out. The locals were given grenades and bazookas and would have a go at us at the drop of a hat.

Sometimes they pulled the grenade out of their pockets at the same time as the pin and there were more local casualties than Brits. They put a bazooka through our NAAFI but missed everybody although I did get some shrapnel in my beer. We were stationed up country at Hiswa at another remote transmitter site but we did have the Army there to protect us. We were given rifles but no ammunition. If we wanted to shoot anybody we had to get the Station Commander's permission showing the necessary evidence. It beggars

belief if you actually got shot, but would make a brilliant "Carry On" film!

The locals did lay a mine in the aerial farm in the tracks of our RAF Police Land Rover when doing the rounds but the Snowdrops couldn't be bothered and a camel trod on it and this was when I was in the middle of tuning up one of our high powered transmitters. I thought I'd overcooked it a bit when the building shook. The transmitter was the size of a small bungalow with water cooled power amplifier valves. It had a side door that you went in to trouble shoot with your "debollocker" stick to discharge the capacitors working at ten thousand volts.

I quite enjoyed my brief stay there. There wasn't much to do but sand shark fishing and there were parties held by some of the LOP's in town but the camaraderie was good and you did get a medal. The GSM: the General Service Medal. My version is the "Gallantry in Service Medal". Also there were duty free shops in town and I bought my first SLR camera (Single Lens Reflex) a Practika.

The next place they were short of wireless fitters was RAF Sharjah so I was given another wad of air travel forms and off on another adventure. There was a squadron of Hawker Hunters there *bombing* the shit out of the fuzzy wuzzies. RAF Transport Command travel was in Beverly's or Argosy aircraft, the later being nicknamed the "flying pig". Not exactly business class travel.

This time I was given the task of getting a radio beacon working. It was a mobile beacon stuck out in the middle of the desert again with a mobile generator. Now this was the second time in my RAF history that I actually used my brain to work out the problem. I was



helped by another lad and we puzzled over the circuit diagrams until "Eureka" I worked out that it wasn't earthed properly being mobile on rubber tyres.

#### The mobile radio beacon in the middle of the desert in Sharjah

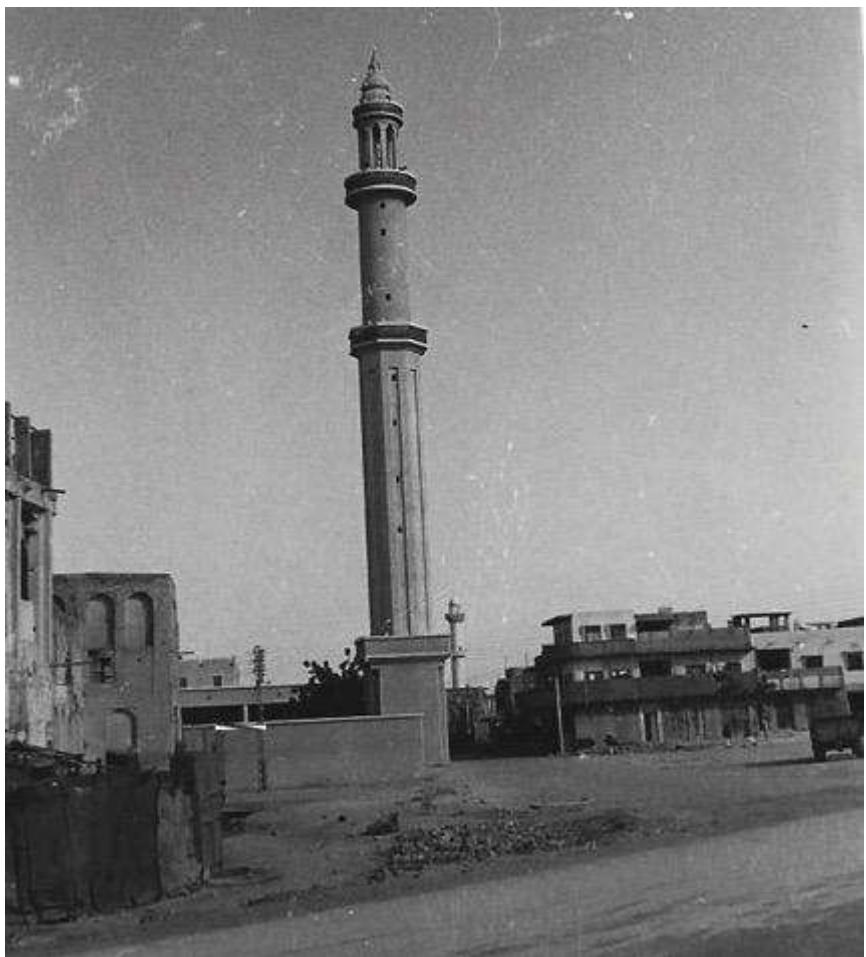
So we had to dig a hole six foot by six foot, and three foot deep, fill it with layers of iron mesh and charcoal and then fill it up with water and stick a metal spike into it. It worked and all we had to do now was run it up and wait. They sent out special aircraft to monitor and calibrate the frequency and we just had to sit there swatting flies for several weeks until all the tests were completed. Fortunately my colleague played bridge so we set about inventing a new bidding system and found our esteem in the bridge circles rising. Obviously we forgot to mention our new system to the opposition, this was in the days long before we heard of EBU rules.

Sharjah was down the road from Dubai and we had to go there several times to get stores. There were no tarmac roads, you just followed the tyre marks in the sands until you saw a minaret. This was the tallest building in Dubai at the time. The only tarmac roads were those where all the Consulates were. There was a large covered gold market across the creek and my previous experience of bargaining came in handy although the "Bleeding Ayrabs" as I called them were hard bargainers. Coming out of Sharjah you saw the palace and a big canon outside; this was where they put criminals across the cannon and fired.

There were no direct flights back to Nairobi so I waved my travel forms and got a lift to Bahrain and had to wait there for a couple of weeks until at last I was back "home" in Kenya after my "cooling off" period away from the diversions of Africa.

I had signed on for a two and a half year posting but after independence we slowly shut down all the RAF equipment and I volunteered to stay on for another six months. I got moved to Eastleigh in the COMCEN and oversaw the Kenyan Air Force slowly take over. It was quite amusing seeing these young black airmen in the mess walking round with a tray and putting everything on their one plate: soup; meat; fish; potatoes; vegetables; gravy; apple pie; custard etc etc.

I was so busy that my letters home became less and less and Dad wrote to the Commanding Officer asking if I was still alive. So my time in Kenya came to an end. I arrived in Keanya and left in Kenia. I doubt if have covered half of the exploits I got up to but I'm afraid it's the best you're going to get until they invent a memory pill.



The Minaret, the tallest building in Dubai in 1964

## **Scotland**

Now my parents had moved during my African adventure. Dad had retired and moved to a grotty one up, one down town house in Surbiton and when I arrived there was told by the neighbours that they had gone on holiday to Margate without telling me. Do you think they were trying to tell me something? Anyway I figured out where they were and found a bed in their holiday resort and got on the next train.

Now I was sun tanned and in my colonial white suit was a formidably handsome figure! I went out to a casino and picked up not one but two ladies and walked them home feeling like a king. That didn't last long and back to reality and Surbiton and sharing a downstairs room with Dad in a spare camp bed.

I had saved up some money in my POSB and went out and bought a Humber Hawk. A beautiful, two tone blue model and drove up to my next posting in Scotland. I arrived at RAF Turnhouse, later to become Edinburgh International and was duly sent to Pitreavie Castle and from there to RAF Balado Bridge, another transmitter outstation in the middle of nowhere, well actually only a few miles from Kinross with happy memories of Mrs MacKay's boarding house and enormous steak suppers. This time I was actually the Station Commander, the longest serving Corporal.

The camp was an H shaped wooden hut , the living quarters on one arm and the mess and kitchen on the other arm. Then a short walk over to the transmitter hall. All set in a large aerial farm with a small road down to the main road to Kinross. There was a small stream going through the aerial farm that flowed into Loch Leven and sometimes you could tickle the odd trout or two.

Our cook, Sean Pearl got married and asked me to drive him to the church and hotel afterwards in my posh car. I dropped him off that night and with some pals we managed to find out which room he was staying in and crept up there. We were having great difficulty suppressing our giggles but managed to knock on his door with a "telegram for Mr Pearl" after a long pause the door opened and once the eyes opened slammed in our faces muttering "Bastards".

Then there was the "Clippies Balls". The bus conductresses dance. The Clippies were very smart ladies all wearing starched collars and ties with their uniforms. I went there and waited outside afterwards for one of my pals to come out and got waylaid by a couple of clippies asking for a lift home. How could I resist, and on the front bench seat of the car it became obvious that one of them wanted to stay a while. I got back to camp with one fuming pal demanding know where the hell I'd got to.

It was definitely a bird pulling car until a drunken mini driver did a broadside into me one night, killing himself and writing my car off completely. The Procurator Fiscal advised me not to make any third party claims as the deceased's family were poor and would be unable to find the funds. That was me buggered and like an idiot I let it pass. So no car and no money.

The Kirklands Hotel was our favourite drinking hole although there was quite a good choice of pubs around. Kirkcaldy was close by and as a seaside town had a variety of drinking and eating places. Nearer on the shores of Loch Leven there was the Lomond hotel which we used sometimes for private parties. A boat party there was all set and unknown to us the land lady

had been in touch with some "Call Girls", telephonists that she knew and invited them over to take advantage of the free booze and food. This was the start of my downfall. As usual we all got very drunk and I sang my usual daft rugby songs wearing my enormous jazz jumper. I managed to get on with a blonde there and we agreed to meet later.

My favourite dance hall was the Raith Ballroom in Kirkcaldy. I can't explain why but it just had loads of character and the band playing there later went on to become BBC's Come Dancing TV programme, "The Andy Ross Band." Talk about coincidences, he is now here in Spain running a local choir and we meet up with him a lot and I blame him for my meeting my wife where his dance band played.

I staggered around and bumped into a gorgeous young lady. Now bearing in mind I was still on my PhD in Gauche but trying to become sophisticated. I therefore chatted her up in French and so when she accepted my offer of a drink, she turned to me and said "how's life at Balado Paddy?". She was one of the ladies at the Lomond hotel boat party. This put me in my place so I reverted to English and when I found out she had a car I asked her if she would like to go out the "Yetts 'O' Muckart" a lovely little pub cum restaurant out in the country. "Ok" she said, "well if you pick me up at Balado , I'll take you out there for drink" says I. This puzzled her a bit as she was used to being taken out in Jaguars and Rovers and obvious felt this was a challenge. That'll teach her! I married her four years later.



Fay Dryburgh, 20-year-old daughter of Provost James Dryburgh, Lochgelly, won the Kirkcaldy district G.P.O. Interflora competition. She lives at 134 South Street, Lochgelly, and has worked in Kirkcaldy as a telephonist since 1963. In round two she will compete with girls from the Edinburgh area.

I didn't realise I was going to marry a "Call Girl"!



Cath and provost Jimmy, Fay's Mum and Dad



Cathy and the Duke of Edinburgh

She had a Ford Zephyr, her Dad's car and we got out a lot, sometimes till late into the morning. Her father used to ask her what time she got home. "Oh, just after midnight". "Four hours after bloody midnight" he said. He was the local Borough Transport Manager and had to go to work very early in the morning in a car that was still warm!

We used to make various forays to the local dance halls and one of my pals was Arthur Lancake. Arthur was one of the nicest blokes you could ever wish to meet, and he was the best looking bloke I ever met. He was the most athletic bloke I ever met and the shyest bloke I ever met as well. So when we went out to a local hop we would shove poor Arthur out front and wait for the bees to come to the honey pot and pounce leaving poor Arthur with the ugliest one.

Back to the Raith ballroom, after I had started courting the lovely Fay and with all the lads from Balado there, Fay asked Arthur for a dance. "Oh, I couldn't possibly," says Arthur. "Your Paddy's girlfriend!" I was away on some course or another.



Paddy's girl friend 1968

We tried all the local danced halls and went to the Cowdenbeath Miners Social club once. Only once. We walked in all dressed to the nines in suits and collars and ties and all Brylcreamed up. The men were still in their miners overalls , the women in their factory blouses, their hair done up in cloths, leaning on their tables with their pints in their hands eyeing us up and licking their lips. We had to make a hasty retreat before we got graped. There was a group of them!

Then there was the Milnathort Town Hall Saturday night dance. There was a drinking ban on then which meant the gent's toilet was full of everyone drinking half bottles of whisky. The girls all dancing with each other with their handbags on the floor where they

stood. Then the punch up would start and the girls all jumped on the chairs around the hall swinging their handbags at any passing male target. At 10.30 the local bobby would look in, walk up to the two largest blokes, bang their heads together and drag them outside which signalled the end of the dance.

We met some local characters on our social rounds, one of them was called Wattie, short for Walter. He was an alcoholic coal merchant who would arrive after his rounds still covered in coal dust. He was harmless and we always had fun with him even though half the time I couldn't understand a word he said. So one night I was out at local pub with my new consort, the lovely Euphemia, or Fay as she was known when in staggered Wattie. He came over to our table and I rose to greet him and saw my partner dive under the table. A little bemused, I said hello to Wattie as Fay crawled out from under the table.

"Och, you ken my niece then Paddy" says Wattie as I get a sheepish grin from Fay. He was a character indeed and I will always remember him and my Dad held in deep conversation at our wedding some years later. Now bearing in mind Dad was educated at one of the best public schools in England and could not possibly have understood whatever Wattie was saying and vice versa but they obviously hit it off together.

I used to organise barbecue and dance nights at Balado. Ring up the local nurses home and get any other local girls in, this was before I met Fay. I went out with a local barmaid and asked her back to one of the dances. She had a lovely head of hair but turned up at the dance party virtually bald which put me right off. She wasn't phased by that and disappeared into one of the billets with a new escort. We found her new boyfriend sitting by his bed nonchalantly, not a girl in

sight. It suddenly dawned on us that he had locked her up in one the metal wardrobes and we sat by him for nearly half an hour trying to get her released but he stood his ground vehemently denying anything to do with any girl. We gave up in the end feeling sorry for the poor girl.

I had to go back down to Locking for a cryptographic course prior to my next overseas posting. I met a young lady there who owned a Mark Ten Jaguar. Well, I'm afraid I had to kick the Ford Zephyr into touch but not for long. A few weeks after my return I bumped into Fay in the Kirkland's Hotel in Kinross and our romance was reignited. We used to go to a lovely old castle called the Dungeons for drinks and dancing and the first night when the drink driving laws introduced Fay asked me to drive the Zephyr down the track to the main road. I was rather drunk and I had to reverse this big beast down this narrow track for a couple of hundred yards in the dark with sheer drops on one side into the freezing river. Boy, was I relieved when I reached the bottom. The things you do for love!

It was our first night out after we'd been reunited and dancing with her in the dimmed lights of the small dance floor, I was overwhelmed with the most romantic feeling I had ever had. True love ! But alas, I was to be taken away from my true love and depart to another far flung country and do my duty for Queen and Country so that everyone can sleep safe in their beds at night in England and Scotland and Wales. I'm not sure about Northern Ireland.

# Cyprus

Cyprus. An idyllic island in the sunny Mediterranean. I arrived at RAF Akrotiri and bundled into a Land Rover and was driven up and up to a mountain hillside covered in snow! What the fuck was going on? I was duly introduced to the meet and greet department and issued with full arctic clothing. A bloody great big Parka, mittens, under gloves, submariners socks, thick white long socks, thermal underwear, snow pants and insulated boots and snow shoes. It was November and the winter was just beginning.

The camp was divided into two parts: the RAF living quarters and the Forces holiday ski camp. This was Troodos and then along the mountain was the big Radome which was named Mount Olympus. This was the RAF radar site overlooking the eastern Mediterranean. It was famous for watching the six day war between Israel and Egypt which nobody in the UK knew about until after the event.

I was put in charge if a little radio hut right on top of Troodos next to the helicopter pad. It was a British UHF ground to air communications system which I knew absolutely nothing about. Not a piece of cryptographic equipment in site. Hey Ho! Once more I had to figure out how to work the bloody thing and spent many happy hours freezing to death in this cabin making sure it was kept working properly.

It used to take me twenty minutes to get dressed and then another five minutes to walk the fifty yards to my cabin. When eventually the winter did come, it was bitterly cold with horizontal snow blizzards and twelve foot snow drifts around the camp site. We were at six thousand feet, that's twice the height of Ben Nevis.

There was a small radar unit next to my cabin which had a motorised net covering it to keep the ice off, but that was invariably frozen to a stand still. Mind you, the view from my little platform next to the helipad was stunning when the skies cleared.

I could watch the tourists swimming in the med on a sunny day and used to build igloos on the helipad until some high ranking pongo (Army) officer tried to land. He was not amused neither was I trying to shovel several tons snow to clear the pad. We were snow bound for a couple of months and had to wait until the RE (Royal Engineers) came and dug us out with their snow ploughs.

There was a hotel at Troodos which was accessible but mostly we spent time in the various duty free camp bars or in the camp cinema. I used the Corporals Club bar which was next to the mess with the options of the Officers Mess, the Sergeants Mess or the OR (Other Ranks) bar.

The cinema was very entertaining only available to us at Troodos camp and it was the platform for the quick wit and repartee of the vocal critics which added to the entertainment. Sometimes we had visiting WRAF ladies who were secreted into the back row and had to withstand the camp humour. The favourite was always the Tom and Jerry Cartoons as with all camp cinemas with the rousing chorus of "good old Fred" during the intros of the director Fred Quimby.

So this was my home for the next two and a half years, snatched away from my beloved Scottish Lassie. I would write voluminous passionate letters of my undying love and await the long weeks before I received a loving reply: "thank for your letter, it's a bit cold here, must dash, got to do my hair. Love Fay!"

I learnt many years later that if she told me what she was really doing I would have been a bit downhearted. So I made the effort to take my mind off romance and concentrate on the local activities. The Holiday camp at Troodos was a ski centre so I had a go at that, darting through the pine trees down Mount Olympus slopes, well the nursery slopes anyway. But the main hobby was drinking which was the only option during the winter months.



My UHF Cabin in Troodos 6000 feet in the Mediterranean



The "PU" Club in Famagusta on a weekend away.

There was a "PU" club which was a select group of people who liked to drink. It consisted of twelve members who had to be voted in unanimously. There was a pound a week membership fee which was saved up every three months and then blown on a riotous weekend down on the coast at Famagusta. I was honoured to be invited and carried out the necessary duties involved.

Sometimes we would go up the "Panhandle" the furthest point on the East coast. It had the most beautiful empty beaches several miles long and we would take the necessary crates of booze and cook on a camp fire and sleep under the stars, waking up with a mouthful of sand and a cracking hangover. There was a monastery at the point where you could actually sleep on a bed for free, but that was for wimps.

But the best times were had in Famagusta where we found a bar that sold draft lager, liquid gold dust, a luxury we didn't have on camp living off cans of Tenants Export. We drank the place dry and then off to the night clubs. Famagusta was in those days considered the jewel of the Mediterranean alongside Beirut.

So the LIPs, that's us single chaps all lived up the top of a mountain but the LOPs, married families, all lived in the village of Platres. This was a picturesque mountain village nestled in the forests just about twenty minutes drive down the mountain through the notorious "Seven Sisters" series of hairpin bends. It was a favourite holiday resort for the rich Cypriots to get away from the heat of the coast. Set amongst the pine trees it had some lovely pubs and hotels and the families rented apartments from the locals in some delightful properties.

The best hotel in Platres was the Forest Park hotel which had a large swimming pool. We were allowed to use it if we behaved ourselves. You had to pay to get in and pay the normal tourist prices for beers etc. There was a families club set up down there in another hotel which held all the social events such as dances. Some of the families adopted some of us "singlies" as we were called and we would spend the weekend down there sometimes .

If my adopted family were on shift I would get a lift down there and knock on a few doors with a bottle until I found a party. One party I got "invited" to asked me in only to find that the only drink they had was Keo Brandy. Now this brandy had the "Good Housekeeping" seal of hygiene awarded normally to Harpic and Domestos. Most brandies got Gold medals from Brussels or Paris. Not this stuff. So I had a few drinks and sat

down behind a large sofa knowing full well that I would end up dangerously drunk asking the hosts to make sure I didn't do anything stupid.

I awoke the following morning and was offered some breakfast by somebody I had never seen before in my life. He said that his wife thoroughly enjoyed my party piece last night. I was two miles away from my starting point and had no idea to this day how I got there. That brandy was a killer and the excuse for most of my adventures in Cyprus. Or could it have been the rarefied air?

I got volunteered somehow to sell Marks and Spencer's seconds, I don't know why they always pick on me? So I had a large suitcase full of shirts, trousers, jumpers, underwear, ladies blouses etc which I touted round the LOPs houses in Platres. Sometimes I would just throw the case into the house and wait outside while the female vultures had finished picking the bones out of it and collect the money and head off to my next house.

Now I also got volunteered to be the agent for service family discount flights to the UK. This was for any relative of a forces serving person who wanted to come out to Cyprus to visit them. Now it came to me that I could use this to get my beloved Fay to come out for a holiday here and so I got all the necessary paper work sorted and awaited the arrival of my "Step Sister". The papers had to be signed by the Station Commander, Squadron Leader Paddy Bergen. So she got on a Comet and flew out so see me. We canoodled after our long break in the gardens of the Forest Park Hotel and bugger me who was there unusually, the CO. "You're very friendly with your step sister Corporal O'Farrell?". "Yes sir," says I. "We're a very close family."

Now I was adopted by John and Linda Townsend who agreed to put Fay and I up during her stay. I organised a party there on her arrival and in a mischievous mood told all the lads not remark on Fay's red legs because she wore wellies all the time being a Scottish country girl. The Lads obviously couldn't stop looking at her legs until the truth came out and she clobbered me something rotten. Still on my PhD in Gauche. But still the holiday carried on.

Following on from my East African Safari adventure, I bought a Peugeot 404. I tried a Citroen DS but it blew up half way up the mountain. So off we went to Kyrenia. John and Linda with a few others had rented a villa down on the coast there. This was before the Turks invaded northern Cyprus so we stayed in this enchanting little town with a small harbour with lovely little character restaurants. I think Fay managed to forget my little misdemeanours as she enjoyed the clear blue waters of the Mediterranean and the delights of the Turkish Mezees. We found a lovely little restaurant run by gay Freddie on the harbour wall which became our favourite.

We went up to the Panhandle and camped on the beach there in solitude apart from the occasional dung beetle and a goat shepherd who insisted on pouring water over us from the well when we showered depriving me of my duties. We left and gave all our left over rations to the shepherd who was so overwhelmed he dashed off and returned with a present of some eggs. We'd just made a omelette with a half a dozen surplus to requirements but thanked him and returned to Platres. it was bloody hot on the beach and we had run out of drinks so had to drive to the nearest town about 5K away. We had a puncture on the way and after I replaced the spare wheel we got to the town

when I said we should go to the garage. Poor Fay was gagging for a drink and suggested otherwise. I think that was the only time I have ever been really thirsty.

We stayed with John and Linda enjoying their hospitality. They were a lovely couple; John was an Air Traffic "Scope Dope" working in the dome at Mount Olympus. Linda was a character, never short of voicing her opinion who loved to host parties and organise her herd of Singlies who she took under her wing.

Fay in our rented villa in Kyrenia



Platres had some good drinking holes with the Grand Hotel run by Paul being the favourite and where all the social functions were held. The dances were popular and my dancing prowess was used with the married ladies . The Petit Palais was another drinking and eating hole where they did a mean barbecue kebab. There were lots of bars and of course the Families Club where my amateur dramatics shone. I was the lead role in "Doctor in the House". With the startling views over the mountain top especially above

the clouds, it got me painting a lot and I started a painting class in the Families Club to add to my other activities. I had a young Officer come up to me and asked if I was selling anything which was of course illegal. Having vehemently denied this he then asked me to get him some flannel trousers, inside leg 30 waist 32!

He was young and keen and entered us for the Middle East Severns rugby competition. I was captain of the cricket and rugby teams, not through my playing talents but because I organised the travel and a bloody good piss up afterwards, complete with my full range of action jokes. I explained to him that our rugby team was not really up to the standards of such a high level tournament. He wouldn't hear of it and so off we went down to Episkopi and our first match was against the Tank Corps. It felt like they were still in their tanks after the match. We acquired quite a following amongst the spectators as we were quite clearly the underdogs and got louder cheers than anybody else and I very nearly scored a try but ran out of steam half way down the pitch much to the amusement of the crowd. It must have been the fags and that Keo Brandy.

Now I won't have a bad word said about Keo as they did make a rather nice brandy, Three Kings. This was their flagship brandy and of course their beer was drinkable. St Pantelemon was a local wine that was rather tasty if you had a sweet tooth along with Commandaria which made during King Richard the Lion Heart's wedding to his bride.

Then of course there was Kokkinelli. This was available wherever you went and was extremely cost effective. When you went for a kebab in a Greek Cypriot restaurant you could have as much of this as you liked, free! It was the harvest reject and worked wonders. The

moment it hit your taste buds it grabbed them and throttled them and from then on you could drink as much as you liked without any pain at all. No wonder I don't drink red wine anymore.

There was an annual wine festival in Limassol every year and I always booked two weeks off during that and held the camp record for the most attendances. I managed ten days. You were given a plastic cup and it would be filled up at every vineyard exhibition stand for as much as you wanted. I have fond memories of sitting in a large ornamental pond discussing the world with the Canadian correspondent of the Financial Times during one of my attendances.

The local Greek Cypriot bobby in Platres was a Sergeant Takis who kept us in order or tried to. He had a brother Andreas who had a garage down in Limassol. He befriended me and used to take me out shooting giving me a twelve bore gun, ammunition and food and along with his dog showed me how they hunted Partridge and Pigeon. This meant getting up at five o'clock in the morning for a walk up the side of a mountain to be ready to start shooting as the sun rose up. We had to walk in line along the mountain with the leading guns down at the bottom so when you shot up you wouldn't hit anybody.

A lot of them were ex EOKA and some of them had Thompson machine guns. At the end of the shoot those without a licence, that's me, had to drop the odd bird into the back of the police Land Rover as we left. Boy was I knackered but a wonderful experience. I was the envy of the mess as the cook served my partridges for all to behold. The lead shot wasn't that tasty!

Hero's Square was infamous for it's night clubs and bars and when the roads had been cleared from

Troodos we all escaped down to Limassol to taste the delights of the exotic nights on the coast. There was one bar, the Green Rock which was the most popular drinking hole prior to going to a club. It had nothing going for it, just a large room in white distemper with the occasional table and chairs but for some strange reason everybody went there. One night there was a rather good looking blonde at the bar surrounded by men like bees round a honey pit so I didn't give her a second look. I went into the gents and was asked to "move over mate" by somebody in a rich Mancunian accent. It was the blonde! It's a funny old world isn't it?

So off we go to a night club charging in dressed in full arctic gear, Parka snow boots the lot and you could hear the cry of "here come the Mountain Men" go up as we released our pent up frustration of being locked up in our winter Wonderland for so long. We had some great nights there and I got a photo sent to me by post of two blokes with me in one of the night clubs and to this day I haven't got a clue who they were.

Now during my beloved 's stay with me in Cyprus we decided to have a night down in Limassol and were joined by Tom and Shirley Long. Neither Fay or I can remember what we did that night apart from staying in a hotel close to Hero's Square. It was about one o'clock in the morning and the ladies wanted some cigarettes and toddled off into the square quite innocently asking around where to get their fags. Tom and I wondered where the hell they had got to and couldn't believe they had gone out on their own. Innocents abroad!

We had many happy excursions down to Limassol and found many friends who would put us up for the night. If not we could stay in the Transit billet in Akrotiri the main base just outside Limassol and after another boozy night in Hero's Square I asked for a taxi. I woke

up back at Troodos minus a wrist watch. The driver had asked me where I came from not where I wanted to go, back to Akrotiri, five miles down the road from Limassol.

I met a Glaswegian WRAF lady and took her out for a night out in Limassol but on the way back to her camp at Episkopi, I had a puncture. I changed the tyre and took her home with a quick snog, said good night. I suddenly realised my hands were black and hated to think what her blouse looked like when she returned to her barracks. That was the end of that romance. The PhD was going well!

Our camp General Duties Corporal, Paddy Kennedy from Belfast got married to a local girl in Platres and some of us got invited to the wedding which was a typical Greek traditional wedding in one of the local mountain villages. Lots of dancing with handkerchiefs and Zorbas dance and lots of local schnapps to drink called Zivania. It was pretty potent stuff and one old Greek boy, dressed in baggy trousers, shit catchers we called them, riding boots etc, snatched a glass from my hand and threw the contents down the cobbled streets. He lit a match and threw it after the liquid which exploded . "No good" he exclaimed! It worked for us!

There were some lovely mountain walks through the forests around Troodos and Platres and on a good day you could actually skree down the side of the mountain to Platres from Troodos in lieu of transport. It didn't do the soles of yours shoes any good though. We walked through the forest once only to find a disused monastery. It was a very still and sunny day, a bit spooky until a phone rang inside the building, scaring the shit out of us. It was an old Bakelite phone but not a sole in sight.

There was a squadron of Lightnings posted at RAF Akrotiri while I was there and they were a lively bunch. "Lightning Jockeys" they were called. Just sitting astride two rockets which hurled them into space at Mach 2 must have been exhilarating but obviously they needed to let off steam and we would bump into the pilots at restaurants in Limassol and they were as mad a bunch as we were. They all looked so young and had some marvellous tales to tell.

There was an exercise there with the USAF who employed U2 planes. They were well known for their high altitude flights above enemy radar. At the end of the exercise they showed the invigilators their aerial photos of the areas they had "bombed". The invigilators agreed with them as the RAF had supplied them with similar photos only taken above the U2s by the Lightning Jockeys. The USAF boys were not amused. Then an Air Traffic conversation was overheard when a Lightning was obviously doing a bit of naughty reconnaissance work over enemy territory and was asked to identify himself. After several attempts the RAF pilot was told that they would send up interceptor aircraft if he did not reply. He broke silence and informed the ground ATC that "This is a Royal Air Force English Electric P1 Lightning jet fighter. Send'em up. I'll wait!" There was a deadly silence after that.

There was always a problem of drink at Troodos as there wasn't much else to do and one of our MT drivers was a case in mind. He would often try to rip up his 1250 (ID card) or jump out of one of the top floors in the barrack block. One day he went completely berserk and it took four hefty army lads to hold him down until a medic arrived to subdue him.

Now this particular MT (Mechanical Transport) driver was well known for his driving down the Seven Sisters hairpin bends just after the Engineers had cleared the road and there were high banks of ice either side of the road. He would pretend he was on the Cresta Run at St Moritz in a bobsleigh and put the Land Rover into neutral and glide around the ice bouncing off the walls of each bend putting the fear of Christ up the unsuspecting passengers.

I went to bed on Christmas Eve after a heavy drinking session and awoke with a vivid dream of an airliner crashing over the Turkish mountains and killing twenty two people. So I put on a towel and my flip flops and with my washing kit strode out into a blizzard and down to the main guardroom to warn everybody of the pending disaster. I was in tears by then but the Snowdrops patted me on the head and told me to go back to bed. Well, I was having none of this and decided to take matters to a higher authority and charged into the Officers Mess. It was pitch black and I stumbled upon our keen young officer and a visiting WRAF Air Traffic girls in a somewhat compromising position. He ordered me out and as was the tradition, the next day the officers served the airmen with the Christmas dinner. He greeted me with a "and how are we today Corporal O'Farrell?" and I don't quite understand why I was the one feeling embarrassed.

The families club in Platres held committee meetings now and then as did the Corporals club and after one of their meetings they decided to get rid of their television. The television was rubbish so all the married Corporals came up to the next meeting of the Corporals Club at Troodos and voted to buy the families club TV. We were outnumbered even though we didn't want it. So it got installed and we were lumbered with it even though it rarely got turned on. But one evening

somebody wanted to watch something and the diehard drunks felt a bit put out. The Mess popped in with some left over pasta dishes and for some strange reason I ended up selling pasta portions to throw at the TV. We could not get this bloody machine to stop working, the problem being that the transmitter was only a few kilometres away on the top of our mountain.

We made a lot of friends with the United Nations detachments from all over the world. They had to monitor the cease fire line running through the centre of Nicosia and the rest of the Island between the Turkish and the Greek communities. My friend Andreas in Limassol hated the Turks from a previous generation and when driving around Limassol he would drive several miles out of his way rather than pass through a Turkish quarter. So the United Nations detachments had a difficult job which was quite stressful not being able to use any weapons. The Australians were the maddest bunch and would pop in to see us now and then which always resulted in a massive pissup, their motto in life being that you might get run over by a bus tomorrow so make the most of today. And boy, did they do that to the ultimate end.

Towards the end of my stay in Cyprus I bumped into Chris Anscombe, a fellow 90<sup>th</sup> Entry Locking boy in the Bypass bar playing in a band but didn't have time to stop and chat but several years later we did meet up with him and Sue. I also just missed Cyril who arrived there a few days after I left. So an eventful and enjoyable two and a half years passed by in Cyprus and it was time to go back to Blighty.



The drama group in Platres Cyprus:  
"Doctor in the house".

A mixture of RAF and wives and Royal Signals Army  
and my mate Dick Mabey (the one with the walking  
stick).

## **Cyprus to the UK overland**

My mate Dick Mabey had purchased a brand new Toyota Corolla duty free. As long as you kept it back in the UK for at least a year you didn't have to pay the purchase tax back and he wanted to drive it back and asked me to join him on a little adventure to get his car back to the UK. So we set out our plans which involved signing the official secrets act as we were passing through Communist territory. We boarded the ferry from Limassol to Piraeus in Athens and off we went. The ferry had been contracted out to a US sixth form college for girls. Holy shit! Having spent two and a half years stuck up the top of a mountain with hardly a white woman (single) in sight we thought we'd died and gone to heaven. We made a brief encounter with some of the ladies but too quickly we had to disembark and say good bye to them.

We drove round Athens and got a bit lost but fortunately I had picked up a bit of Greek in Cyprus and stopped in large square and rattled off "katalavi Ingles filos?" Do you speak English my friend? The bloke looked at me and in a broad cockney accent said "do what mate?" We found our booked hotel, the Hermes in Athens and drive off the next day to a lovely little fishing village on the East coast called Volos. We arrived there in the afternoon in what seemed to be a ghost town. We woke our B & B host up and had a siesta and made our way out in the evening. They all came out of their hiding holes to promenade along the sea front and we enjoyed a pleasant sun set watching all the girls go by (with chaperones).

Off next day to Salonika or Thessaloniki as it is now known. Another pleasant evening eating out along the sea front and an early start off to the border with

Yugoslavia. We handed our passports to the control point and got told we were not allowed in. Eventually we found someone who could speak English and were advised to go back to Salonika to the British Consulate there. We eventually found the consulate and was told that Dick was considered to be an Ugandan by the Yugoslavian authorities. Born and bred in Willesden and as white as you could get we found that a bit disconcerting. The consulate explained that Dick had renewed his passport in Cyprus and there were Ugandans fleeing from Idi Amin and flooding European controls. The British had then put in place a ban on anybody with a passport that had been issued outside the UK. Poor old Dick dined out on this for years and he was issued with a temporary new passport to get him back to the UK.

So we tried again and made our way into Yugoslavia and drove over the Krakor Pass, a high mountain track through villages with pigs and tanks and stumbled on a five star hotel in the middle of nowhere. We stayed there in luxury and made off the Skopje the next morning. There had been a huge earthquake there recently and the place looked a bit of a mess so we pushed on to the next big town which looked like a typical Communist designed commune with rows upon rows of grey five story apartment blocks. Moving swiftly on we eventually made it to Dubrovnik.

We found somewhere to stay, freshened up and off into town for a meal. We had a drink and watched in total amazement young females walking around with what looked like large hems between their wastes and their legs. This was our first sighting of the "Mini" skirt! Boy, if this is communism, bring it on!

Once we'd got over the trauma of the mini skirts and put our eyeballs back into place we moved on up

the coast and stayed a pleasant night in Split. Another meal by the harbour and on to Opatjia a holiday resort on the coast where we spent a couple of nights and then by passing Venice up through Italy into Austria and the picturesque mountains where we stayed in Leinz. We had a United Nations meeting in a pub there with half a dozen other different nationalities including Dick as a Ugandan!

On to Innsbruck which was a tad expensive and so into Germany and a long drive to Stuttgart. We found a cheap hotel in our guide book and wandered around looking for it but we were looking in the wrong direction. Up! It was an old wartime underground bunker. Cheap but claustrophobic.

Our next stop was Koblenz which was a pleasant drive up the Rhine valley where we stayed for a couple of nights in this charming town with lovely parks and views of the Rhine where it was joined by the Mosel.

It was a small hop to Liege for a night and then when it was my turn to drive Dick passed the buck to get through Brussels. That was ludicrous as all the minor roads had priority over the major roads and you could be travelling down a main highway and all of a sudden a car would shoot out of a side road. From there to Dunkerque and on to the ferry to the UK and Billericay, Dick's home in Essex.

We relaxed after our 1500 mile journey and then I rushed up to Bonnie Scotland to see my beloved after over a year's absence. I arrived in Lochgelly only to find my lovely lady was working in Edinburgh during the Commonwealth Games. So much for absence makes the heart grow fonder! Anyway she eventually arrived and condescended to embrace me. Eventually we had to disembrace and I had to go back to work. My next

posting was RAF Stanbridge. Back to the underground communications dungeons in Leighton Buzzard.

## **Return to the UK and the wedding**

This was in 1970 and by this time my salary had broken the one thousand pounds a year barrier and I was on an exalted twenty pounds a week. Several of the lads from Troodos had returned and we met up at Len William's sister's wedding in Barking. There was Dick with Len, Mick Curry and John Larkman. We looked after the groom on the wedding day and it was the first time I'd seen a man drying his hair with a hair dryer. He did have the advantage of long hair as we had our short back and sides. "What a ponce" I thought, little did I know that in a few short years once out of the strict forces regime of the RAF I would be doing the same. We took him down to the pub much against the bride's wishes but managed to get him to the church on time.

Len's Dad had made a room in the loft made out of debris salvaged from Barking Town Hall which was being demolished and we all stayed up there. Len's parents were ever so hospitable and we stayed on for a few days after Len's Mum had made fifty two breakfasts for all the guests. We ordered a Chinese take away and the Chinese couldn't believe the amount of food we'd ordered and apparently I caused chaos by eating it on the stairs stopping everyone getting to the toilets. I made a long lasting friend with Len's sister Vanessa, I don't know why but I think she was a bit of a nutcase, a character and I still keep in touch with her and Len.

I was qualified to be promoted to Sergeant but needed to pass the technical exam. After several shots I eventually made it and remember sitting in my little Corporals bunk sewing on my new stripes and packing everything up and moving down to the luxury of the Sergeants Mess. I had managed to scrape up enough of my meagre POSB savings to buy a little three door

Austin A 40 which I used to go up to see my beloved in Scotland when I got time off. The M1 and the M6 hadn't been finished then so I used the old Roman roads: the A5 Watling Street and then onto the A1 Ermine Street and across Northumberland on Dere street, the A68 which was a real roller coaster up and down and sometimes in a blizzard. My poor little A40 managed to get up to about sixty miles an hour on a good downhill stretch but struggled up some of the hills and all in the name of love.

I then got posted to RAF Greatworth, the transmitting outstation of Stanbridge near Banbury. This was a lovely little camp, similar to Ruiru but with an Officers and Sergeants Mess combined and a NAAFI and a separate airmen's mess. The Sergeants Mess had Marge as their cook and to this day Fay still compares the Macaroni Cheese dish to hers. There were married quarters next to the camp on the road down to the village. There were only two of us in the Sergeants Mess as the others were all married so we spent most of our time in the NAAFI with the hoy poloy. Big Al Peacock was the camp character from Newcastle with his lovely wife Celia and two kids. We stayed friends for some time after I'd got demobbed. We used to go over to Stanbridge to play rugby together and he played bridge.

The only trouble with life here was that I was on shift duty. Two nights on duty from eleven until eight the next day, then the two evening shifts and then two day shifts. After a month we would get five days off which meant I could "zoom" up to see my beloved in Scotland. As I was in charge of the shifts I would allow one person a night off during the night shifts as long as I was allowed to sleep. So I used to carry my bedding over to the transmitting hall at night and make do without sleeping the shift off the next day. This was a

sight Fay couldn't quote get over when she moved down here.

Up in Scotland after a boozy night out I caught Fay in a bed the next morning with a hangover looking a bit yellow in matching yellow linen and did the decent thing and asked her to marry me. I got some sort of mutter and a grunt which I took that as a "yes" and asked Jimmy, Fay's Dad for her hand in marriage. "Have you got anybody else who could have her sister?" he replied. So I took that as a "yes" as well.

Now let's just go back to Fay's idyllic holiday in Cyprus with me and upon her return she was interrogated by the Kirkcaldy "Call Girl" syndicate which included her sister Moira, Sheena, Maureen et al. She was given some pretty tough questioning on her goings on in Cyprus and her future relationship standing with the handsome young airman and years later I learnt that she categorically stated that she would never marry that plonker!

Say no more!

So I was welcomed into the Dryburgh family and especially Fay's mother Kathy who would end up as my best friend. She was a lovely lady who had to have her knee joint taken out when she was quite young. This did not stop her from becoming the Scottish Ladies Open Golf champion in her younger days. Now in the days of my courting we all smoked : Wills Woodbine; Players Weights; Senior Service; Capstan Full Strength; and of course after payday the luxury of some Turkish variants: Passing Cloud; Sobranie Black Russian to name but a few.

But Kathy's favourite, although she didn't smoke was Embassy. The ones with the coupons. This was the

age of the coupons like Green Shield stamps. But Kathy saved Embassy coupons from her family and her family's friends: the Call Girl fraternity. Fay tells some lovely stories of people asking if they could pop into see Kathy and would bring her coupons as an excuse to start up a party.

I had kept in touch with my mentor, Cyril and just missed him in Cyprus as he arrived the day I went back to blighty but there was another 90<sup>th</sup> member in Cyprus, Chris Anscombe who I later visited in Australia. He was part of a group that played in a bar on the "By pass" of Limassol which was popular with the service lads. The "Bypass" went round the North of the town with green fields on the other side. It was thirty years later that Fay and I went back to Cyprus and the "Bypass" ran through the *centre* of the town.

Cyril got married just after I arrived back and i was invited to be his best man at his weeding in Market Harborough, a town I was to become well acquainted with several years later. Cyril was becoming a bit of a drifting nomad and would disappear somewhere up to the hills of Scotland. I invited him to be my best man and he turned up from one of his travels with half a deer. "It fell of the back of a mountain" he said in his cockney accent. Fay's Dad being the Town Provost, the Mayor, used his influence and it got taken to the abattoir and duly cut up and we had some tasty venison meals for a few days.

So our engagement was duly announced and the celebrations began. Every time we went out for local drink in Lochgelly, mysterious drinks would appear on our table and somebody who "kent" Jimmy would wave an acknowledgement. The pubs in Scotland closed at ten o'clock but we, the locals would be sent to the back room at ten while the police came in via the front door

to check everything and we would have to wait until they had finished their drinks before we could return to the lounge bar and continue. To go out for a quiet pint it was virtually impossible.

So now the wedding day had to be agreed and all the necessary rituals and invitations sent out. I only had Mum and Dad and my half brother Simon and Helen to invite, not forgetting the Troodos Mountain men and my best man Cyril .Fay's family and friends made up the numbers of about sixty. The venue was the Balgeddie House just outside Lesley, a large hotel with grounds.

The church was the Macainsh Church in Lochgelly High street. Fay's bridesmaid was her sister Moira and of course dress was Morning suits and Kilts. The weather turned out fine and it all went well with the help of the Red Coated Toastmaster. That was the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1971.

I had hired a Ford Cortina to go down to Cornwall for our honeymoon staying at John Townsend's parent's small family hotel in Lelant. We managed to get away from the reception covered in streamers and towing old tin cans etc, we pulled out of the hotel, drove to the nearest lay-by, got rid of all the decorations and promptly drove back up to the hotel via the back entrance and stayed the night there listening to the party goers enjoying themselves.

We set off the next day and drove down to Bristol staying at the Unicorn Hotel and the next day making it down to Cornwall to the side of St Ives Bay, a picturesque inlet overlooking St Ives, famous for it's clear blue skies inviting painters from all over the world.

The idyllic holiday came to an end and back to Greatworth for us both. Fay had managed a transfer

within the Post Office (later known as British Telecom) to the telephone exchange in Banbury and so we had to find some accommodation. Unfortunately there was nothing close to Greatworth and we were allowed to use the old NAAFI Manageress's flat behind the bar in the accommodation block. It needed cleaning as it hadn't been used for several years and some furniture scrounged. A bloody great pantechicon pulled up outside one day and it had come all the way down from Lochgelly driven by one of Jimmy's mates and all it had in it was our meagre furniture. We bought the driver a bottle of whiskey for his troubles.

We filled up our little A40 with all the wedding presents etc and drove down from Scotland. We got as far as within twenty miles and the poor little car expired. It had served us well as we waited for the AA Man to come who lifted the bonnet, stuck the petrol pipe to the carburettor back on and off we went totally relieved.

When I first arrived at Greatworth they held a Christmas draw with the first prize as a bottle of wine with a box of chocolates thrown in. I didn't think much of that so set about organising a proper Xmas draw. We started selling tickets in January with a large board with some five hundred numbers where names were written. The bar was staffed in shifts by the lads and they got paid in raffle tickets. We had weekly raffles for Xmas draw tickets amongst a sales push throughout the year.

I managed to get a deal with a travel agent for a low season long weekend to Majorca trip which got even more people interested and so the ticket sales soared through the year. Come Xmas the numbers on the board were duplicated into raffle tickets and put into a box. The prizes were allocated a number and similar raffle tickets put into another box and the show went

on. There were clothing, wine and food vouchers, electric DIY products, Walkman and CD products plus an enormous hamper and of course some chocolates. There must have been about fifty prizes in all and at last the grand day arrived. Both boxes were filled with the equivalent raffle and prize tickets and random choices from each box picked and called out so a random ticket number was then allocated a random prize number. This eliminated any duplicity. Then my number was called out and someone drew a random prize number, the trip to Majorca! Oh, shit, how embarrassing was that! But everybody said how much time and effort I'd put into the event and as everybody enjoyed it I humbly accepted it. I have to say it was no big deal but it was a nice break and my first trip to Spain with my beloved.



Dad, Betty, Cyril, POF, Fay, Moira, Fay's sister, Kathy and Jimmy.



All the guests at Balgeddie House, Glenrothes.

## **Holidays**

I can't remember ever going on a holiday with my parents. I have a photo of me with my mother and dad on a beach which I believe was Weston super Mare but I have no recollection of it. I have another photo of my mother and I with Simon and Julian my half brothers on Dunstable Downs having a picnic of which I have a vague recollection but that's it. My holidays were mostly spent at the boarding school with overseas students.

When I was at Marchwood Park Preparatory school I remember having David Foyn, a lad from Siam (now Thailand) as company and we chased the gardener's daughter, Deborah all day long teasing her about all her West Indian boyfriends. She was about 21 when we were 11 or 12.

My holidays were spent at home when allowed which were enjoyable, usually in a caravan on an airfield learning to drive in an old Morris Bullnose which was the fire engine cum sheep chasing vehicle to keep them away from the runway when an aircraft came in to land. That was at Bembridge, Isle of Wight. There I could walk across Taylor's farm to the beach for a swim. Thirty years later I returned there with the family and stayed on his caravan sight and met up with the son who remembered me.

Then we moved to Stokes Bay, Gosport staying on a caravan site next to the beach when I could run down for a swim on the pebble beach. I remember coming down from Churchers College, Petersfield by train for a holiday break and couldn't find my parents at the station so I just jumped on a bus a got home and got into the caravan through a window and waited for my parents who missed me at the station and had been looking for me asking the police for help.

So that was my holidays until I joined the RAF and then I would stay with some pals during our holiday breaks. Mostly with Taff Grant with his parents at Swansea. His Dad was a chiropodist and his sister and her boyfriend were motor bike scrambling enthusiast and we would go and help them on trials usually ending up to our necks in mud. I tried the bike out once near a golf course and shot off across the course ending up in a bunker upside down.

I would go home for Xmas sometimes but once stayed on camp at Locking after they closed it down for the break and stayed in a block having to get in and out of it by a window and with no heating. But when we passed out at Locking in August 1961 about a dozen of us booked to go to Butlins at Phwelli, North Wales for two weeks. I got on the wrong train and ended up in Anglesey and had to get a taxi which cost all my holiday savings but I managed to borrow some money and we all had a good time before we split up to go our different ways. We won the trampolining competition and met Ringo Starr who was in the Rory Storm and the Hurricanes band before he joined up with the Beatles.

So our brief trip to Majorca was my first real holiday adventure. Life at Greatworth was very enjoyable. Fay always laughed when I went on night shifts with a camp bed and a duvet. As the shift leader I could allow some of the shift workers a night off as long as I stayed on in case of any emergencies so I got my head down in a "quiet" corner with all the air condition going on and could therefore have the next morning off relatively fresh.

I played rugby at Stanbridge with some of the lads and the bridge now was getting serious. We eventually got a married quarter on Astral Row just

next to the camp and the weekends were taken up with long bridge sessions. I played with a big Geordie lad Al Peacock and the wives made the bacon butties through the night. We all smoked and the air was thick as we bet a penny a hundred on rubber bridge.

So my time in the RAF was coming to an end of my 12 year engagement (from the age of eighteen) and I could sign on again if I wanted but I felt the RAF didn't want me so I started to get ready for the big break into civy street. I went to Witney Technical College on a City and Guild course on Computers which was paid for by the RAF as part of my resettlement schedule. Then started to look round for a job and was put in touch with an agent who handled ex forces in the electronics field. He give me a questionnaire to complete in my own time and so I eventually figured out most of the answers with a little help from my friends.

I got an interview with Univac, a division of Sperry Rand , the next largest main frame computer company after IBM down in their head office in Euston and got the job starting as a Customer Service Engineer on one of their customer's sites, Shell, in Hemel Hempstead. It overlooked the "magic" roundabout with lots of mini roundabouts within the main circle which confused nearly everybody but did keep the traffic flowing. The RAF allowed me time off in the last six months to start work which was shift work again, so I was now on two salaries and Fay and I stated looking for a house to buy near my work.

## **The real world, Aylesbury.**

Fay had managed to get a transfer within the Post office or British Telecom as it was now and had a nice job in Banbury where we became life long friends with Bob and Sylvia. He was a farm worker in a lovely little tied cottage while she worked in the telephone exchange. We used to have some great parties over there with them and their family but now we had to move. They were long standing friends who came on holiday with us in Tunisia and eventually came out to stay with us in Spain



Bob and Sylvia

Looking around Hemel Hempstead it became obvious we couldn't afford to live near there so we came North and looked around Aylesbury. We went out one day to buy Fay some shoes and bought a house instead. 133 Tring Road: a semi detached three bedroom house on the A41 just out of the town centre with an enormous playing field at the back belonging to Hazels the big print company just up the road. It had a lovely back garden with an ornamental rose garden which we turned into a fish pond.



Our first home in 1972, 133 Tring Road Aylesbury

So my time came to move and we gathered all our friends in to help: Darkie, a local works man on camp came down and built us a Cotswold stone fireplace. Cyril came over to help as we filled the fridge up with beer to help us while we cleaned the place up. Fay and her mates arrived looking for the tea and milk. Ooops! Not even any tonic for the gin.

She was glad we had moved from the institutionalised atmosphere of the RAF. She didn't like being told what social functions she had to attend and when she was allowed to smoke after the Queen's toast. There was an old Warrant Officer in charge who was a rear gunner during the war and waiting to retire and he used to tell me what to do on technical matters that he knew absolutely nothing about but always pulled rank on me. I don't remember having a special leaving party on July 31<sup>st</sup> my official demob date. I was given a £300 tax free pension payment for my 12 years of service which bought us some furniture while Fay got a lot more when she left the Post Office. Our first furniture was an orange box and a coffee table I stole from the married quarters. Our first meal was fish and chips in paper sitting on the stair case. I built a wall unit in the lounge with drinks cabinet that lit up when you opened it.

So we settled into life in the real world, the world of commerce. Fay got a job locally in the Bucks Advertiser and I continued in the world of main frame computers. We had a 10 Megabyte memory delivered to our site to upgrade the system. It had to be lowered onto a reinforced floor and was about 3 metres long like a mains drain pipe.

This was the latest technology in 1972! We had a Frenchman join us and we put him up for a few weeks. He loved cooking as long as it used up a ton of butter. He was completely mad and on our journey to work he would try and run over any traffic wardens he could see, mounting onto the pavement. We also put up a young student doing a PhD in History. Although she was very intelligent she had absolutely no common sense what so ever. We tried to teach her some board games to while away the evenings but she just couldn't grasp it at all.

We bought our furniture from a posh shop in Aylesbury but after a year it started to wear out so we had the rep round who wrote his report and we got a reply from the makers saying we weren't sitting in it properly. I replied asking for a diagram of the correct sitting angles required and eventually we had it recovered.

I was getting tired of working shifts and yearned to get into sales. I met up with an old pal I knew when we were in Kenya, Roy Williams and his lovely German wife Miki. He lived in Luton and had set up an Insurance agency and raved about his sales experience so I asked the Univac sales team if I could join them. They asked me what sales experience I had and I told them about selling Marks and Spencer's seconds but they were not impressed so I looked around and got a job as a sales representative selling finance: HP, loans etc with United Dominions Trust.

My first boss was Simon Kunzer who taught me well but was a terrible driver. He would get on the motorway and straight on the fast lane and sit there doing exactly 70mph and not budge an iota. I got my first company car, a Morris Marina and promptly drove it into pillar in the car park on my first day there. We had moved on with our old A40 to a Fiat 124 and were now able to sell that with my shiny new car.

I got a couple of week's sales training at their HQ in Potters Bar. My job entitled visiting garages and selling Hire Purchase for their customer to buy cars. There were a few competitors; Lombard, and couple more but I just swanned around Buckinghamshire everyday popping into car sales rooms and chatting up the sales people trying to get them to change to UDT. I didn't need appointments, just using my natural charm

and winning smile to get the business. Sometimes I would cold call into factories to sell industrial loans. Most firms used the banks but some of them didn't want the banks to get involved so that was where we came in. I got very friendly with a chap who owned a tool making business: making moulds to make special manufacturing tools.

He had just bought a house in a posh area of Amersham and was out walking his dog, Henry, a Dulux sheep dog when he got stopped by one of his new neighbours who asked him to stop his dog urinating on his hedge. It was raining and he was in no mood to muck about so looked down to his dog and said "Henry, will you stop pissing on this gentleman's hedges" and walked away.

He also had another tale about his visit to the North of England to a small rural village where he got short of cash. He popped into the local one man band bank and asked the cashier/manger if he could withdraw a couple of hundred pounds of petty cash. Unfortunately he didn't have his cheque book with him but gave all his banks details for the local to phone. The cashier was holding to get through and asked him what his current balance in his account was. "Overdrawn by a couple of hundred thousand," he replied wherein the cashier put the phone down and said "what's another couple of hundred then!"

I met a lot of characters in the motor trade and a father and son from London with a Renault franchise said they would consider changing to UDT if I took them out to lunch at the Bell at Aston Clinton, a rather up market restaurant with such customers as Richard Burton ad Elizabeth Taylor. I put the case to the boss who got the OK from HQ and off we went. As we parked the couple noticed a Ferrari in the car park and said "I

see old Harry's here then," and as we walked into the restaurant they saw him sitting across the room and shouted "I see you're still smoking that fucking Ferraris then Harry!" (smoking is the trade term for driving) I tried to find a large hole to jump into and I didn't even get the business.

I had a foretaste of luxury dining and took my beloved there for our first anniversary evening. We were seated in an adjourning cubicle with another couple opposite us. He was an elderly gentleman seated with a very attractive young lady with a stunning figure, her bosom being held up with one single tie. I had great difficulty concentrating my affection to Fay and was even more distracted as the evening wore on and the young lady's halter top slowly lowered. It was painfully obvious that she wanted to get him upstairs to complete the transaction but he was having none of it determined to finish his port and cigar. I was hard pushed to stop myself jumping across and taking over.

Now this is where I start to introduce friends who did not play bridge. We met them after I left the RAF and settled in Aylesbury, many years before I actually started to play proper bridge, that is at club level even though this introduced us to friends who became social friends. These local friends have stayed with us since we first met and have come out to Spain to keep up the friendship and we still haven't tried to introduce them to bridge!

I used to call on a car sales room in Chesham and always said hallo to the bloke who cleaned the cars. He had retired early and just wanted some pocket money. The sales man in the office refused my advances until one day I found the cleaner in the office in a suit who told me the sales man had left and he had been

promoted and did I want the business as I was the only rep to take the time of day to talk to him.

In the Ford and Slater garage I met Tony Hemstock a retired army chap in the Royal Signals who served in Korea. We got on well and became lifelong friends along with his lovely wife Pat who was an absolute character.

Then there was Richard Banks who had his own second hand business in his Walton street show room in Aylesbury in 1974 and his lovely wife Rita became long lasting friend as well. They lived in a smart house in Cambourne Avenue and had some wild parties there. One I remember vividly where there was a lad called Handy Andy for obvious reasons had his hand down the front of a ladies blouse. The husband walked past and said "try the left one"! Richard wore a wig which was blatantly obvious and played the trumpet in the local band, they eventually moved to a large country house called Merrydown with god knows how many rooms and had even bigger and better parties.



Rita, Richard, Pat and Tony. Our Aylesbury friends

One of the most famous parties involved Tony and Pat along with Rita and Richard. We had moved to Lutterwoth by then but still kept visiting Aylesbury on a regular basis . it was both Pat and Richard's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and we decided to have a party in the Territorial Army hall in Aylesbury and make it one to remember. It was a theme party based on the Sound of Music which involved the Von Krapp family.

So rehearsals started on a regular basis in the three families houses. All children were involved including ours, Trevor and Antony to make up the Austrian family. Richard and Rita's Michael with girlfriend and the scene was set to the part of the movie when the childfren all had to say good night to their parents. Von Krapp was Richard dressed up as labourer with a soft hat smoking a cigarette and Maria was Pat, pregnant in a house coat.



The von Krapp children



The Von Krapp and some “fancy” dress



Checking the fancy dress line up with Rita and Fay





The Von Krapp loving couple, Richard and Pat

Having obtained the first bit of education certification since leaving school with City and Guilds Computers A at the end of my RAF career, I decided that I had better get some more bits of paper and

enrolled in the Aylesbury College of Further Education on an ONC Business Studies course. This coincided with the GCE syllabus so I went for Law, Economics, Accounts, Statistics and Commerce O Levels exams as well and added A Levels in Law and Economics.

I also had been advised upon leaving the RAF that my trade qualifications entitled me to join the Society of Electronic and Radio Technicians as a Member so I now had some more bits of paper to add to my GCE O levels in English and Art from school for my CV.

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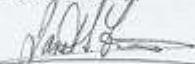
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Dear Member,

Please find enclosed your E.R.B.  
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Also enclosed is a form which should be  
completed and returned with the appropriate  
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to obtain a certificate of registration.

Yours sincerely,

  
Janet S. Firmin  
Assistant Membership Secretary

Enc'd.

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We had some lovely neighbours in Tring Road. An old couple on the semi side who were no trouble and Roy and Sandy on the other side. They were about the same age as us and we got invited to their parties and obviously we had to return the hospitality. He dragged me into his firm's cricket team which meant travelling away on some Sundays to places as far away as Harwich. This added to our social life in Aylesbury and we had old friends visit us. Cyril and his new wife and son and Al Peacock with Celia and family. His two sons used to run around the sports ground out the back of

our garden and they were both very competitive. If one of them got in front the other would trip him up.

Simon Kunzer got promoted in UDT and the office manager Colin Tourret got the branch manager's job. He was ok but lacked the charisma of Simon. His wife was as dull as ditch water. He invited us to supper and we sat and made small talk for several hours. She thought jazz was the name of a pop singer and eventually the food arrived. Two scones, cut in half with some butter and jam. We thought that was the starter but that was it! We watched the bottle of wine we brought stay unopened and rushed back home before the local fish and chip shop shut.

Life in UDT was good but I yearned for the picture Roy Williams had painted of selling insurance with lots of bonuses. I was on a reasonable salary at UDT with no commission but didn't have to make any appointments, just introducing the odd industrial business now and then and keep all my point of sale garages happy. So I eventually looked for grasses greener and got a job with the Equitable Life Assurance company. They were the oldest life assurance company and didn't pay commission to brokers only to in house sales representatives.

I was given a strange yellow air cooled Citroen that sounded like a tractor as a company car and was sent on a six weeks extensive training course which really covered every aspect of their products and also how to talk on the telephone and answer any awkward questions. They taught you how to bypass open ended questions where the potential customer could avoid to say yes or no. So you used questions like "when would be best to visit you. Thursday morning or Friday afternoon?" this put them in a verbal corner unable to say yes or no. It was a thorough sales training course

and when you returned to your branch they already had appointments set up for you to get started. You got some leads from adverts but you had to do a lot of cold calling.

This meant going through the local voters roll and calling on neighbours of current customers using them as references. Fridays were put aside for telephone calls and you were expected to have at least four appointments each day. I started ok but after a few months I started to run out of leads. My area was Berkhamstead. My contemporaries were working in large areas like Aylesbury or High Wycombe with larger population coverage than mine. Occasionally I would get a lead in London and have to go down and give a presentation to some of the large firm of accountants.

Meanwhile Fay had transferred from Banbury to the exchange at Aylesbury and then moved to the Bucks Advertiser and then onto the Manor House hospital for the mentally and physically sub normal. There she met Paula Rogers and we got to know her family: Her parents Tom and Dorothy who lived in a lovely little bungalow in Hazel Drive opposite the hospital . Dorothy made lovely fruit cakes and then there was Paula's brother Michael had had started a kitchen equipment company which moved to South Africa. Paula was going out with a firemen at the time and they would come up to Scotland with us but she dumped him and met Joe Gomez a BT engineer and future husband who both became life long friends. Working for British telecom had it's rewards and BT threw a big thank you party to all it's employees one year and Joe dragged us along to Alton Towers just up the road from us.

All the rides were free and there was a concert in a big hangar deejayed by Tony Blackburn with lots of

bands with Status Quo heading the list. It was a great pity that it was raining but we really enjoyed it watching Rick Parfitt on stage not knowing that several years later in Spain we would bump into him at our local Indian restaurant in Coin as he had a villa just up past Las Delicious urbanisation. I asked him to help me as I had a problem with my neck. "Too much head banging when I was young" I said which made him titter as he wished us well and drove off in his chauffeur driven Range Rover with his Indian take away. He died there several years later in his villa no doubt from drug problems.



Rick Parfitt who we met later on in Coin on stage with the Status Quo band at Alton Towers.

The hospital had some resident patients and some day visitors who could leave their mentally sub normal parents to come for rehabilitation. There was a six year old girl who came every day and would be left with Fay on the reception until her parents came and collected

her. Sometimes I would come for Fay and play around with her and she laughed at me. The nurse later told Fay that it was the first time she had ever laughed. Boy, that hit the heart strings. The patients were a mix of Downs Syndrome and those with some sort of sub normality but appearing quite normal. A visiting lorry driver asked Jimmy one of the patients to direct him as he reversed until he hit the wall while Jimmy stood there laughing.

I was told one evening coming home after a gruelling day which usually involved a heavy business lunch that we were taking some patients out for the day at the weekend. I wondered what the hell I was getting mixed up with. So on Sunday we picked up Jimmy and Nigel and went to one of the doctors houses. Nigel was Downs Syndrome but Jimmy looked ok but had speech and hearing problems. The host had a piano and Nigel immediately sat down and started to hammer away on the keys. He stopped and called me over and demanded that I turned the music pages over for him. It was in the end a lovely day out if a bit different.

I was enjoying the freedom of the restricted work contract in the RAF and started looking around for another job after one year with UDT and after a year with the Equitable and went down to Harlow for an interview for a job as a sales engineer with ITT, a big American telecoms company. I had to sit with a lot of others and fill in a personal psychometric questionnaire that were all the fashion. One of the questions asked what you did when you went to a party: join your golf club pals: sit in the kitchen; help with the food or do your party trick dropping your trousers. Now I had just been to a party in Essex at Dick Mabey's sister's house in Southend and done the later so ticked that last box. I got the job.

I was given a second hand pale blue Ford Consul as a run around with automatic gears which I loved and awaited my Ford Cortina two tone brown new car. We had progressed from the old A 40 to a Fiat 124 which we sold once I got a company cars.

The job entailed selling electronic components such as transformers and power supplies to large companies mostly in the telecommunications industry. As my role in the RAF was an Electronic fitter, Ground Communications I had a rough idea of the type of equipment involved and was taken out on the road with one of the older sales engineers . He was very knowledgeable about the products but seemed not to bother about getting the order which to me was the whole object of the exercise. Basically you had to know what the new projects were and who the engineers were designing the product and then find out who the buyer was. You then had to sit down with the engineer and design your product into the end project and then persuade the buyer that your product was better than the oppositions. This I found out involved lots of business lunches.

I was called into the office by my Sales Manager, a rough and ready Glaswegian who was a football referee at the weekends and I got told off for not spending enough expenses and showing all my contemporaries off. I wasn't used to expense accounts but soon got the hang of them. My area was now a tad larger than Berkhamstead, everything north of the Thames. My major accounts were mostly sub contractors of BT who manufactured the telephone exchange equipment: GEC; Marconi; Plessey who were all based in Coventry, Liverpool or Nottingham and then Ferranti which meant I had to cover Manchester and Scotland as well.

This was in 1976, the year of the hot summer and the year Trevor was born. We had transformed an ornate rose garden into a fish pond with carp, gold fish and some bottom feeders to keep the pool clean. Fay's Mum and Dad came down to visit us although it took some explaining to Jimmy that he didn't have to drive round Spaghetti Junction only the fly over bit. Spaghetti junction was copied from the American designs but they forgot that they drove on the other side of the road. This meant that the curve of the road as you came off the motorway slowly became more accentuated as you slowed down so the UK version was the opposite which meant you came into a steep curve immediately as you came off the motorway.

Jimmy made it alright anyway and enjoyed sitting in our back garden watching the fish with Cath. He would go down to the nearest pub for a drink and order "a half an' a half" which meant half a pint of beer and half a gill of whisky. As the landlord didn't understand Scottish he started pouring the whisky into a half pint glass! Maureen came down as well to help Fay during her pregnancy period and Trevor appeared on the 16<sup>th</sup> July. He started to move at Stoke Mandeville but ended up in the Royal Bucks hospital after complications and they had to use forceps. I wasn't allowed in during the birth and kept waiting in the corridor for some hours before someone asked me what I was doing and I was allowed in to see Mum and baby although baby was separated from Fay which is frowned upon nowadays.

We had made a lot of friends in Aylesbury and still kept in touch to this day with a lot of them. Paula and Joe got married at the Weston Turville Golf Club around this time. I had taken up golf in order to take out my customers with UDT and used this club as it was local to where we lived and also cheap. It was only a 9 hole course and the club house was recently finished and

refurbished quite nicely. Michael, Paula's brother was the best man but ten minutes before the dinner asked me if I would mind doing the speeches as he wasn't a very good public speaker so I used the speech from one of the ITT business lunches I'd heard about communication and a missionary and a native going up the Amazon in a canoe. It's one of the few good jokes I can remember and is relatively clean.

Paula and Joe's wedding with Paula's Mum and Dad, Tom and Dorothy with Paula's brother  
Michael with wife Elaine  
who we stayed with in Perth, Australia later.



## **Book Two**

### **Duplicate Bridge**

Duplicate Bridge involves several pairs of players in a club. Once the hand has been played it is put in a board and the same hand is then moved around the tables and the scores compared at the end of play. This can involve a number of hands that can take several hours to play. There may be food and drink available but not allowed on the card table and frowned upon if the cards are spoiled.

This does not necessarily involve friends but it does increase your social circle which means playing rubber bridge with more friends, drinking, eating, smoking, swearing, laughing etc.

## **Book Two, Duplicate Bridge**

Lutterworth and ITT.

G. I. Microelectronics

Then Pigs Nose Club

Ericsson

Conferences

Holiday in the States

France, the Canary Islands, hotel rating and Sweden.

Time shares, Sorrento and Spain

Quantum Quarks

Return to Cyprus and visit to Paris

My books and RAFA.

South Africa

## **Lutterworth and ITT.**

My job meant long hours on the road and getting onto a motorway from Aylesbury meant an hour's drive before you started so we looked for somewhere more accessible and stuck a pin in the centre of England which turned out to be Lutterworth. We sold our three bedroom semi and could afford a four bedroom detached by moving North and ended up in Greenacres Drive, number 28. The previous owner named John Stephenson left behind a mural depicting the Boston Tea Party. He was a sales engineer as well and we often met at various trade exhibitions. His wife's name was Shirley and they had a daughter called Philippa who baby sat for us. We later met a couple called Peter and Shirley Stephenson at the local bridge club we had just joined. They had a phone message to call their daughter Philippa and we thought it was our baby sitter.

My main customer was GEC at Coventry and I was chasing a big order for DC DC converters in the BT exchange equipment called TXE4 which was the new electronic exchange replacing the old manual Strowger that Fay used to work on, the order was worth £400,000 and my boss said I had to get it at all costs so I had to look after the purchasing Manager Derek Wall which involved taking him down to London for a night out and arranging a lady for him. Fay was not happy about this at all but I managed to overcome such a distasteful project. I got the contract.

1978 and Antony arrived at Leicester Royal Infirmary. This time I was allowed to be at the birth and managed not to faint. We had kept in touch with Andrew DeBerry. He was the curate at Trevor's christening in Aylesbury who I played squash with and invited him up to christen Antony. He had moved from

Aylesbury to just a few miles up the M1 from us north of Mansfield.

Another customer of mine was Jasmin Electronics a Leicester based company that made monitors for all the airports. The Managing Director was Roger Plant and the Technical Director Dave Andrews. I got to know them and their families as did Fay and we had some great nights out with them. I had to take them out at the All Electronics Trade show at Olympia which involved a dinner dance at the Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane.

All the reps at ITT had to attend and were given a table of customers to look after for the night. I was told to go to the finance department and pick up the cash for the hospitality night. I took the envelope home and Fay opened it and said we could pay off the mortgage with it. There was about £5,000 there. We all got dressed up for the evening and the ladies hired out dresses and looked gorgeous.

I had walked around Carnaby Street and found a shop that did theatrical costumes and saw this fantastic silver brocade jacket which I just had to buy. So there I was in my pin stripe suit and brief case amongst all the punk rockers trying on this beautiful jacket which became well worn and I think Trevor still wears it now and then.

We managed to spend all our hospitality money and one year we had Dave and Pam Whitelaw at our table and he wanted to repay our hospitality and ordered a round of liqueurs. We had a bottle each! I can't think how much that must have cost him. Everybody had either a bottle of Baileys; Cointreau; Ameratto; Drambuie or Glayva to take back to their room to finish off, or take home.

There was always a show at the ball. Lonnie Donnegan was a great hit and got everybody up on the dance floor but eventually was surrounded on stage. He had so much charisma. I remember meeting Norman Wisdom there as a guest one time. These were great times for us and we had a night out in London once in a cabaret cum restaurant night club and one of the wives pointed out some ladies sitting on their own at tables and wondered who they were and when she realised they were "hostesses", and she only went over and sat down with them for a chat.

Our hospitality got returned and Roger Plant with Brenda used to have us for weekends as did Dave Andrews from Jasmin. Dave's Guy Fawkes parties where always good fun and we became great friends with Brenda and family long after she got divorced from Roger. He was a very shrewd business man always looking for opportunities and asked me to do a business plan for taking over a large house just up the road from us on the road to Market Harborough. That never happened but he eventually bought a 23 bedroom property up near Grantham. We had some fun nights there before they split up.



Getting tarted up ready for the ball





The Ball at Grosvenor House, Pall Mall, London

Then the recession started and ITT sent an axeman round the sales force trying to make us leave the company without any compensation. I had a blazing row with him in a pub one day and as a result I got promoted to a new division selling PLCs, programmable logic controllers. I really enjoyed this as it embellished all my computer training. But the days of lavish expense accounts were over. As always I looked for pastures green and wanted to go up to the next level of technical expertise, basically that meant better pay and I moved from selling electronic components to selling semiconductors, microprocessors, the big brave new world and managed to talk my way into a job with an American company, General Instruments Microelectronics.

## **Sales conferences**

During my time spent at Ericsson I had to arrange a number of sales training conferences. This would involve the Swedish technical team to assist in updating any new products and answering any technical queries. I would invite all the distribution and representative companies together with any major customers such as British Telecom sub contractors and Racal. As we had no conference facilities in the Coventry office it would take part in a conference centre and involve food and drink obviously to enhance the proceedings.

To this end I would try to find some interesting locations and our friends in Aylesbury Tony and Pat put us in touch with a new conference centre recently opened up in Tring where Tony worked as a security guard for a period. It was owned by Victor Lowndes, the heads of Playboy Europe and he and his wife Marilyn were still living there when we booked a conference. She was the first English centrefold for the Playboy magazine. It was a conference centre and health spa with squash and tennis courts.

It boasted Europe's largest indoor Jacuzzi set in a star shaped design with a centre island with a palm tree and an adjacent log cabin sauna. I chose a large suite with its own Jacuzzi and a large leather Rhinoceros with a broken horn which initiated some wild ideas to everybody as I showed them round my palatial room. The hotel was still a living home for Victor with photos of all his important guests and pictures of playboy bunny girls all over the place giving it a somewhat erotic atmosphere. It had a library with a large collection of music piped throughout the complex and left me with an unforgettable memory of Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

When the conference was over I had a game of squash with my friend and afterwards we soaked in this luxurious Jacuzzi, palm tree and all. We could just make out another young pair across the steamy atmosphere. They eventually got out and naked, walked into the sauna. My pal and I looked at each other in disbelief and eventually they left the sauna and I took their place and, as in Rome, took off my trunks and relaxed until I was joined by the young lady who had just left, on her own and still naked. What does one do?

There were a few teething problems in running the place as it was very new but the sight of Marilyn coming down for breakfast in her towelling robe with a glimpse of a thigh now and then quickly overcame any complaints.

I later on took Fay down there for a dirty weekend and we went down to Brighton for another dirty weekend which really was dirty. The hotel was in the process of being sold and awaiting a full refurbishment and renovation. It was filthy with old well worn furniture and curtains and peeling wall paper.

In the process of going to exhibitions and conferences you will often come across offers of free weekends from some of the larger group hotels to entice you to book with them. These "free" offers usually only meant free accommodation where you paid for all the food and drink.

I had received a offer of a free weekend from the Metropolitan hotel in Blackpool which coincided with the school holidays and a visit to see Fay's Mum in Scotland. So we set off on Friday night just before Christmas and booked in. I had previously asked for a separate room for the kids offering to pay for it. We were given adjoining room with a joining door. So we

left them there and went down to get something to eat and were dragged into a reception and buffet with some delicious canapés. We asked for room service for the kids but the waitress just filled a plate and sent it up to them. We were then directed outside into a waiting tram, the old electric ones that go up and down the promenade. This one had a large tureen full of hot mulled gluhwein to warm us up and then we rumbled off down the prom to see a large illuminated screen with all our names on. Wow!

On arrival back at the hotel we were then ushered into the disco and given labels which entitled us to free drinks. Wow again! We got chatting to some of the other guests one of whom was the Chairman or President of the Football Association. He told us that the hotel was after his business and if he gave them an order it would fill the hotel. We relaxed a bit and fearing a hefty bill. Then an extremely attractive blonde lady joined us seeking refuge from someone harassing her. And I thought it was my magnetic personality! We, that's Fay and I, danced until about two in the morning and collapsed into bed.

The next morning we had breakfast with the kids and were ushered out into a coach on a trip to a Blackpool Rock factory. The driver was a bit of a character giving us detailed accounts of roundabouts he felt worth doing a couple of times. We did the tour and Trevor and Antony were given large sweet bags which shut them up. We had planned to go to the big sports hall and swimming pool and asked to be dropped off there. It had a wave machine with lots of rides and slides and we eventually made it back to the hotel for the gala dinner. We left the kids in their room and went into the dining room. There were about eight tables of six and around the room were a series of partitions. The food was to die for and at the end of the meal and small

group of actors arrived and announced their performance of "Around the world in eighty days". They acted out a series of events describing a country and then darted behind the screens and changed costumes for the next scene. It was amazing and so enjoyable and unique, I have never seen anything like it since.

The end of a lovely day? No chance. Off to the disco with free drinks again. We collapsed to bed after checking the kids were ok and made it down to breakfast the next morning a bit the worse for wear. The kids ate the full English breakfast with relish and we finished off the day in the Hotel spa and swimming pool.

We packed our bags and prepared for the next leg of our journey up to Scotland but had to settle our account at the reception before leaving. I handed over my credit card and was given the bill. The only item on the bill was "Adult video hire"!

We have never seen Trevor and Antony so quiet on our long drive up to Scotland!

## **Ian and Delia's apartment in Tenerife**

Ian Campbell had an apartment in the Fairways Club, Amarilla Golf, Tenerife which he very kindly let us use when the children were eight and ten, circa 1988. We have kept in touch since then and have enjoyed many holidays and social gatherings since with reciprocal meetings with Ian and Delia in our humble abode in Spain.



Antony and Mum on the Island Bar bridge,  
Fairways 1983



At the same place in 2018

I needed PR and Marketing back up and signed up a company called L JL, based in Stoke on Trent run by Bob Jones who proceeded to get trade press coverage for me to follow up as sales leads. Bob, Ian and I all worked together during those halcyon days meeting at various exhibitions, seminars, trade press venues and we all enjoyed staying and eating at some top hotels and restaurants in and around London. Thank goodness for expense accounts.

After ten years of the good life I got kicked out of Ericson and returned to a normal working life until I retired from exhaustion but still keeping in touch with Ian and Delia and occasionally using their apartment in Tenerife. We returned there in March 2018, staying for a week with Ian and Delia and then a week with Antony and Lisa from Barcelona.

After 30 odd years the name Bob Jones suddenly popped up. He had surfaced on Facebook several years earlier but then we spotted him cycling round Spain and invited him to come and see us if he ever got close to Coin. The next thing we knew was that he was coming to Tenerife to cycle up Mount Teide. I always thought he was a bit mad, but at his age? And we thought it was a motorbike. No, it was a bloody bicycle with those dangerous saddles!

So he arrived and dragged us all out screaming to a very nice restaurant in Los Abrigos, a lovely little fishing village just down the coast from us. Unfortunately Ian and Delia had gone back by then but they had bumped into Mattio, a famous local restaurateur who had moved since our last meeting to the Los Roques restaurant in Los Abrigos.

We managed to squeeze Bob into our little car to save him cycling and set off on a lovely bright if not windy afternoon. Now Bob is the spitting image of Rick Stein and even lives close to him as well, so we had great fun with people doing double takes at our table companion. It was a shame our eldest son Trevor wasn't with us as he is the spitting image of Heston Blumenthal.

Bob is still working, (I told, you he was mad) but said good bye to the Ericsson power products franchise fairly recently which had just been taken over. So we reminisced about the good old days as we enjoyed such delights as lobster, crab and other epicurean wonders with our Maître'd, Mattio ponsing about keeping everybody amused.



Rick Stein (aka Bob Jones) with me, Lisa, Antony and Mum at Los Roques, Los Abrigos

Ian and Bob were part of our transition from naivety through to sophistication. Some would argue that point. Having led a fairly sheltered life whilst in the RAF in the swinging sixties, Ian introduced us to the Playboy Club in Mayfair while Bob dragged us through the culinary delights of Japanese Tepan Yaki. My expense account allowed me to return their hospitality by inviting them to various trade dinner dances at the Grosvenor House hotel, Park Lane.

Reminiscing apart, we had enjoyed a lovely week with Ian and Delia and dined with them at their AGM and Golf lunches in the complex club house and then had the cheek to win at Bingo in the swinging “Rockin’ Horse” pub. I did buy a round!

We drove up Mount Teide one night to see the stars in a light pollution free atmosphere. We got shouted at for opening our car door. We returned home to the warmth of Delia's toasties.

But we had enjoyed the delights of Tapas at San Blas and on our last evening with them we were taken to the "Petit Bleu" in Los Galetas, a lovely Belgian restaurant on the windy promenade. I have to say I have never had such a wonderful juicy and tasty steak in my life. Cooked "Punto" it was black on the outside and pink in the middle. I couldn't have done it better on my nuclear furnace barbecue back home. We staggered back to the apartment and the next day said our fond farewells to Ian and Delia and had a day off on our own awaiting the arrival of Antony and Lisa from Barcelona.



Mum, Dad and little Antony in the "Rockin' Horse" night club

Now Antony's partner, Lisa is a well travelled lady with contacts all over the world so it came as no surprise to us that she had friends staying just down

the road in Costa Adeje. So we dropped them off there one night and the next night went off to El Medano . Of course Lisa knew somebody else on the island who recommended us a lovely restaurant there: El Cabello Blanco. It was delightful, with some interesting and well presented dishes. Of course no holiday is complete without a night out back in the "Rockin' Horse" karaoke night club. I have to say it is not the most salubrious place on earth but you do meet some interesting people there as Antony and Lisa found out one night drinking till late with an excon.

Thirty years ago the family all went Go Karting just down the road from Amarilla Golf so we had to give that a go. Poor Fay was hors de combat with dodgy knee so Lisa took her place forgetting to tell us she had never driven before. We chose the less powerful karts and once again Antony lapped us all and even came second against a dozen more powerful racers. Lisa, God bless her, as usual stole the show coming in 6 laps behind in a 7 lap race, but she did get a round of applause from everybody.

Another wonderful holiday. Thank you Ian and Delia for your hospitality letting use your apartment and sharing some lovely memories and to Bob as well who we hope to be able to return his generosity at our little villa in Spain.



Ian and Delia at the club house in Tenerife

## **G. I. Microelectronics**

Their office was just at the back of Regent Street in London in a side street just off Soho. They had a C-MOS manufacturing plant up in Glenrothes next to my beloved's home in Fife. I had a brief meeting on the first day in London and on the second I was sent down to TMC in Malmesbury, a major customer to help sort out some customer service problems. I was thrown into the deep end attending a board meeting there and having to just sit there and take a load of shit thrown at me. All I could do was offer a full report and come right back to them soonest. I think they felt a bit sorry for me as I crept away with my tail between my legs promising the earth.

I soon realised it was a Hire and Fire company with the dollar as the bottom line. No such thing as human resources or motivational management. If you didn't meet your targets that was it. I managed to last out three years there, the longest serving European salesman. The company had got a grant from the government to set it up the factory in Glenrothes and as soon as the grant ran out they closed the factory down. The problem was it was not very efficient in this new technological era and the manufacture of "chips" was a rat race with a large competitive market. They described the efficiency of the plant as "eating like an elephant and shitting like a bird".

They would get the order and if they couldn't meet the schedule they would ship out what they had made and fill the shipment out with factory floor sweepings, charge the customer the full amount and haggle over the difference. I would go up to the factory on several occasions and got on well with one of the

marketing managers there, Jim Smillie. We actually thought about moving up there and had a look around some of the properties in Edinburgh in the beautiful old Victorian terraced house with 10 foot high ceilings and lots of plaster moulded cornices.

I would have to go down to the head office now and then in London which meant an early start to beat the traffic, find a parking space then go into a hotel and have breakfast. As most of the hotels were on breakfast included packages I was rarely ever asked for the bill. If I was I would just say cash.

My training consisted of spending time with one of their representative companies, Dexter Electronics a subsidiary of their distributor, Campbell Collins of Stevenage. The Managing Director was Ian Campbell who would take me out in his Jaguar to visit customers. Neil Edwards was the boffin who tried to teach me all the technical stuff and I picked up a lot of buzz words but never fully understood the intricacies of microprocessors.

Ian had an apartment in Tenerife in the Fairways complex part of the in the Amarilla Golf and Country Club in the south close to the airport. We spent many happy holidays there and still do to this day. I got to know the Campbell family who worked with Ian in his office in Stevenage and I had to make any trips down there. Ian and his wife Delia were turning two semi detached properties into one and in Rectory Lane in Stevenage with a lovely garden. Delia was into fine arts and decorated the house beautifully as well as doing the garden landscaping. They had three sons who were all borne within three years. John ended up working with his dad and eventually started his own business. I met him a few years ago and he gave me a spin in his new Jaguar sports car.

As I had experience of dealing with telecommunication companies and as GI dealt in telephone chips I was given the task of tracking down the person responsible for the manufacture of telephones in the UK. I had some knowledge of the British Telecom factories in Birmingham and started there. I also knew the sub contractors who made phones as well and so set about trying to find out who was responsible for ordering the number of phones needed. I eventually ended up in a BT factory in South Wales where they repaired phones and came across a chap in stores who had the whole responsibility for orderings parts for the whole of the UK. They had no thought to build new phones until they realised that the market had been taken by the Japanese and Scandinavian companies.

I managed to last out three years of working at GI and was the longest serving European rep and with my itch to move to grasses greener found a company in Leicester who manufactured CNC machines which sounded interesting. Robert Bosch, a German company and so

I went to their factory in the Odenvalds, somewhere south of Frankfurt near Heidelberg. I stayed in a charming little village near the factory in Erbach and stayed in the Gasthof Zum Vildenman. The sales director was a charming man who arranged an interpreter for me, a Canadian lady with very bad acne who tried to teach me German in one month. I did actually manage to get the train to Heidelberg for the day without using any English. However the product was a bit baffling for me technically and although I picked up the necessary buzz words and increased sales threefold but the manager in the Leicester office

saw through me and once more I started to look for fresh fields.

It was about this time that the famous three: Cyril; Taff and myself got invited over to the Isle of Man for Cyril's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party. It was a long time since we had all last met up in Hong Kong in 1961.

Taff Grant, Cyril and son and me in the Isle of Man for Cyril's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party.



## **The Pig's Nose society**

The first thing we did when moving up to Lutterworth was to find a bridge club and start making friends again in our new environment. It was about this time that we made friends with Thelma and Chris. He was a big IT consultant and she was a nurse and both played bridge as did Peter Herbert and Shirley Stephenson. He had done his National Service in the RAF and now had a painting and decorating partnership with Terry Measures and lived with Shirley who worked for some local accountants. Peter was a very good bridge player and introduced us to the Benjamin ACOL system.

He played for some larger clubs in Leicester and was a bit competitive and not one for admitting his mistakes but I played with him on the notorious Friday nights when at the end of the week we let our hair down usually at Peter and Shirley's lovely bungalow in the village of Kimcote just outside Lutterworth. We all smoked and I smoked cigars and we drank a lot on Friday nights as well.



Friday night at Peter and Shirley's home.



Peter, Shirley, me, Thelma, Chris and Fay

The bridge evenings accommodated Chris and Thelma in strict rotation when we would go over their lovely mansion with a swimming pool near Coventry.

This was the start of a long lasting relationship with friends from the bridge club but then we got to know friends of friends and Mick and Margaret. He was an electrician who knew Peter from their work connections and Margaret worked in the Lutterworth Grammar School so we met her through our boys at school. Fay also knew Margaret from the squash club. Mick helped Fay in her project management of the new BACP offices in Lutterwoth. Both Mick and Margaret followed us to Spain with an apartment in Casares del sol just outside Estepona. She became a big wheel in the ICE club. The International Club of Estepona.

This became a tightly bound social group and one day Chris bought a bottle of Pigs Nose whisky as a

birthday present. It had a little card attached with details of the Pig's Nose Club. Entrance was free, it was just a fun thing with a tie and a certificate, so we all joined and had to wear the tie every time the eight of us met: birthdays; Christmas; bank holidays etc and so this was the start of the Pig's Nose Club.



Margaret



Mick



## The Pig's Nose Club meeting in Trevant



Margaret and Mick joining in.

We had some great nights circulating in each other's houses which involved fancy dress and always some fine dining. It was Mick's fortieth birthday party one year and thinking it would be restricted to just the Pigs Nose gang I dressed up in a kilt with a pink "soap on a rope" phallic symbol just visible under and below the kilt. When we got there Mick had invited "outsiders", with all his friends much to my embarrassment. But it turned out to be a fun night as

all the ladies wanted to wash their hands with my soap.  
Mick had a barbeque going and the call was for some  
Chernobyl steaks, well nuked/done!

Our little group was getting well known and some rumours started flying round town about our little club and some people thought we were a sort of secret society. We would be asked if they could join our club thinking it was some sort of wife swapping , "keys in the middle" party!"

## **The family 1985**



Talking about the family and bridge, my half brother Simon and his lovely wife Helen popped in to see us and they told us that they had been volunteered through their connections to take part in a BBC bridge

programme in the local studios in Bristol. It was an afternoon programme and we actually managed to watch it while they were with us. The boys took a double take and watched Simon and Helen on the TV and then looked at them in our lounge. It was quite hilarious seeing their expressions of complete disbelief! Simon was the MD of Brooks Dry Cleaners and well known in the laundry business which meant he was a member of their Guild and he took his turn as the Master of the Guild and had to take part in the Guildhall ceremonies. The Guild had their own apartment in London and he had to attend the lunches with the Prime Minister and visiting foreign dignitaries.

It was round about this time that Trevor was highly involved in gymnastics training at the Rugby Gymnastics club. We got dragged in some times to help especially with digging the pit which was six foot square and filling it with polystyrene blocks. He had to go to various competitions, one of which was in France and we all set off for short holiday trip to watch Trevor but we also did some sightseeing and went to Monet's house in Giverney just south of Paris. This was something else and unforgettable especially for me and my artistic bent.



Monet's house at Giverny



The famous bridge and pond in Monet's garden

## **Ericsson**

It was now 1983 and Fay had found work with a Norwegian lady neighbour Janne doing all her bookkeeping. Janne ran a company selling double skinned fireplaces made in South Africa called Jetmaster. They were extremely efficient burning coal or wood and gave out both radiated and convected heat. Her husband Bill worked for a foundry in Hinckley and he eventually copied the design. I played squash with him and we got to know the family well with their son Jan and daughter Susan.

Trevor and Antony were growing apace and settled well in Lutterworth. Antony followed Trevor to Mrs Wilson's pre primary nursery at Woodmarket nearly opposite the primary school in Moor barns Lane with the High School opposite. I then joined a Swedish company RIFA who wanted a sales engineer to launch their new power supply into the telecoms market. RIFA were well known for their capacitors and also had a microelectronics division and they had started this new division with a new revolutionary design of power supplies that used ceramic substrates to mount the components rather than the traditional PCB method with flow soldering mounted components. It was a DC DC unit designed to go into the new Ericsson telephone System Y exchanges who competed with British telecom System X exchanges. It had increased the reliability of an MTBF (meantime between failure) from 10,000 hours to 1 million hours.

The capacitor and microelectronics divisions in the UK shared an office in Coventry, one of the many worldwide branches with the head office in Stockholm, in an industrial estate just to the north called Kista. So I packed my bags and caught the next SAS flight to Stockholm. It just so happened that Wimbledon was on

so my beloved jokingly asked me to get Bjorn Borg's autograph. Well, who do you think was on the plane? Yes, that man himself so I got his autograph and when I arrived telephoned Fay to tell her that I had obeyed her instructions to the "T" and looked forward for some brownie points when I returned home .

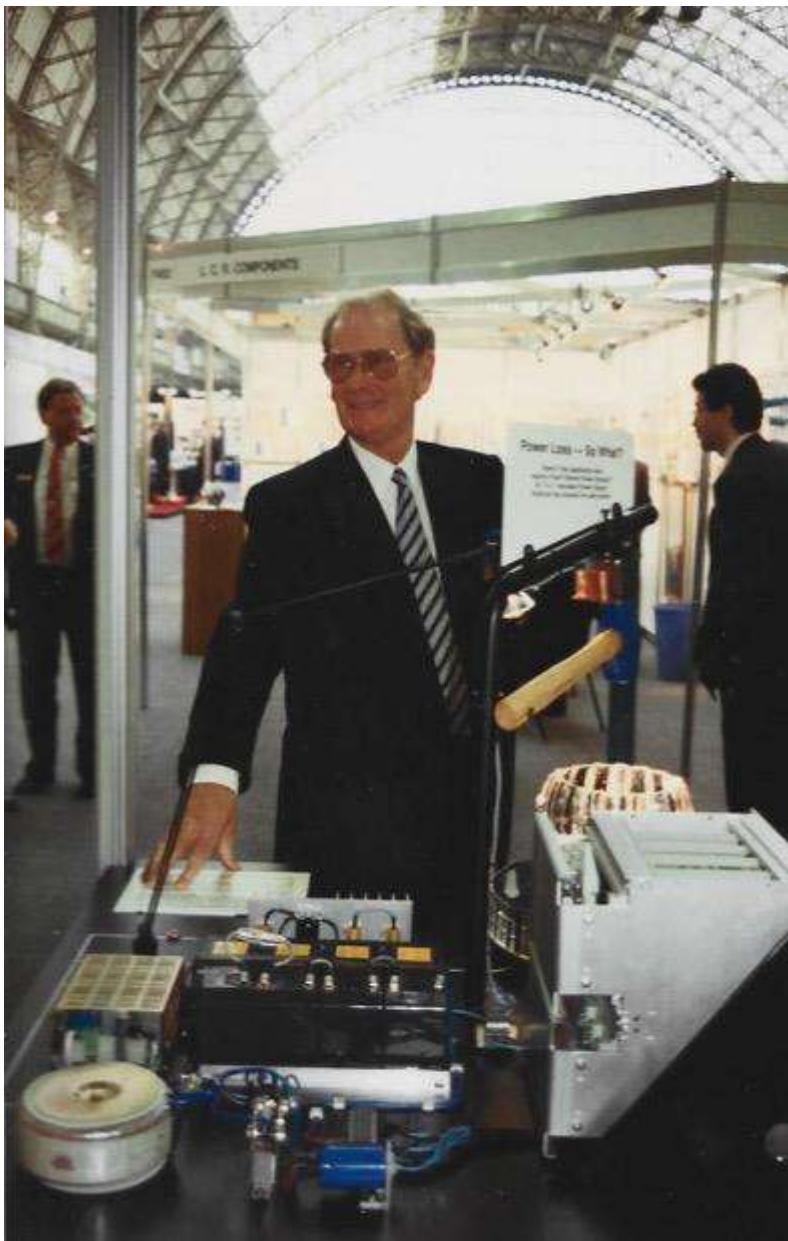
It was bloody cold in Sweden but I was treated with the utmost hospitality and shown around the factory and offices. I stayed in one of these modern functional minimalistic hotels but they did have triple glazed windows to keep the heat in but the breakfast was typical continental but with frankfurters which made it a bit more interesting. I was taken into Stockholm to the old town to a restaurant called "Fem sma hus" which translates to five small houses, all jammed into one three story quaint old town house on one of the archipelagos' islands.

I was given some training and returned to my new office in Coventry sharing with the other RIFA colleagues. I had an empty office and Joan Boardman who worked for the capacitor division introduced me to her friend Judith Peters from the Standard Life office just across the corridor and I set up the new division from scratch. Kevin Dawson was the office manager who worked for the capacitor division and there was a chap in the microelectronics division with his lovely secretary, another Joan. So I got a telephone and eventually a desk and set off on a voyage of discovery.

They had already launched the product from the Swedish HO so I had a number of leads to be getting on with and of course called on my old colleagues in the telecoms industry. I had to set up a PR company to promote the press releases coming from HO. I came across a company in Stoke on Trent called L JL run my Bob Jones and we set up a dialogue with him which is

still ongoing. He is the spitting image of Rick Stein the Cornish restaurateur and we still keep in touch to this day, even meeting him out in Tenerife on a cycling tour. He organised press releases for the electronic trade press which I initiated with the help from Sweden. I was allocated the lovely Desiree to look after me and keep me up to date with the latest news. Her husband was the sales director of Royal Doulton, the famous pottery company and was a bit of a comic and always had a joke ready although it did become a bit tiresome after a while. We had them down to dinner at Lutterworth with Bob and his wife Penny.

This was the start of the mobile phone era and one of our major customers was Vodafone who built the ground stations and as I was always away from the office calling on potential customers or dining out big customers and it became obvious that I needed a mobile phone to keep in touch with Judith in the office when any action was needed after a customer call. I was out of the office at least four days a week and had to cover the UK and Ireland as well. The first mobile phone I got was an enormous monster with the battery the size of a house brick. The only other person in Ericsson to have one was the CEO. I was given preferential treatment as I was kick starting a brand new UK division with a brand new product.



On exhibition duty at Olympia



One of the initial draw backs was that all the stock was held in Sweden which made delivery time a problem especially for small amounts needed for prototypes to get the unit designed into the project so I called on Campbell Collins my old friends and Ian Campbell was dragged over to Sweden to set up an agreement with HO. There was a air traffic control strike on in Sweden at the time so we had to fly to Copenhagen and get the ferry across to Malmo and rent

a car to drive to Kalmar one of Ericsson's factories that manufactured some of RIFA's units. We got a bit lost and ended up in the middle of a forest but eventually made our way back on to a main road and made our destination.

We met all the personnel: Leif Ericsson who was the sales manager; Tobjorn Forsman who looked after Europe and several others and sorted all the nitty gritty out for Campbell Collins to start buying stock. We were looked after well and made our return to Malmo. We stayed in a hotel awaiting the ferry the next morning and I was introduced to the "Wet room" concept of bathrooms. I had a bath and put my clothes on the floor and pulled the plug out of the bath when I had finished and stood back and watched my clothes float away down towards the plug hole.

Ian and I shared a bedroom and he called Delia his wife with me in a falsetto voice saying I was Grunhilda the room maid. We dined out on that night for a long time afterwards. Ian took us out a lot with his friends from Stevenage and a memorable night was had at the Woburn Park restaurant where the drink flowed and one of his friends, quite a posh lady was getting very drunk. We discussed what we thought of people at first impressions and we were going round the room picking on various other customers when she pointed to one of them and quite loudly announced "Oh, she's a prostitute!" One of his friends worked in telecommunications and we shared our knowledge of HF, and VHF transmitters used in the services.

It was about this time that I started get troubles with my neck, getting severe pains and spasms ending up on the floor. The benefits of playing in the front row of the scrum in rugby. I had to get on the "rack" and get stretched and then had to set up a hanging noose

above the bed for me to sleep in at night and then a neck brace was warmed up for me to mould around my neck.





As soon as the boys were big enough we took them travelling on holiday and found a cost effective Thompson's hotel in Tunisia which had plenty of facilities for children and a large beach. The Sahara Beach Hotel in Monastir on the northern coast of Tunisia. It had three blocks which held two hundred twin rooms. They were basic but the whole resort was enclosed in several hundred acres all leading down to a long sandy beach. It was just ideal for kids. Thompson would look after the kids all day and we could just relax and lie in the sun and make friends. There were several swimming pools and play areas. We first went with Bob and Sylvia from Banbury and made the most of their friendship and later went with Donald and Anne .

We went on trips to Tunis with a local taxi who looked after us and I would explore the shops and using my previous RAF experience in dealing with "Bleedin' Ayrabs" used my bartering skills to obtain some good deals for booze and fags. The news spread and I ended up being the local agent for all our colleagues in the hotel. The down side was the food. The hygiene standards were a little under the radar and although my NAAFI stomach survived in these harsh conditions a lot of people picked up tummy bugs. Trevor made us laugh as he walked out of the dining room after dinner one evening, stopped, leant against a large potted palm tree, was sick, wiped his mouth and charged off to catch up with his pals.

Tunisia one could describe as a nice country when it's finished. It was best described as scruffy but it was cheap and the weather was reliable as long as you stayed away from the June July period when it got really hot and Easter was always a good time for us to take advantage of the two day bank holidays and time out for the school holidays. We went to Tunisia three times in the end taking a family break after Antony after he had his fingers accident.

Rhodes was another excellent holiday island where we went one Easter. On arrival we complained about the room and was given an enormous suite where we had parties. We made a lot of friends there and I rode round the island with one of them on a small motorbike ending up caught in the rain. There was a lovely valley in a forest which was full of butterflies and there was the lovely resort of Lindos at the other end of the island. Fur coats were cheap there and we started bargaining for one in the old town. In the end the lady who owned the shop agreed to take twelve post dated cheques the only problem being how to get the coat through customs. This was solved when Fay had blisters

on the flight back and had to be sent straight through customs in a wheel chair.

## **Holiday in the States**

Then there was the big adventure in the States and everybody was excited about going to Disney World in Orlando, Florida. We drove down to Gatwick and stayed overnight leaving the car there. We stayed in the Holiday Inn on the International Drive in Orlando and the kids loved the breakfast with flapjacks and molasses. They were not quite so sure about the grits. We hired a car a Ford Camero which tickled the kids and made our way to Disney World early in the morning driving on the enormous interstate highways with slip roads between each motorway longer than some of our main roads. We parked in an enormous car park and got the hover train over to the main sight. It was enormous with Disney characters dressed up offering guidance and information. There was so much to do and see and this was our first encounter of the Disney queues formed like an enormous zigzag going up and down until eventually you made it to the front having been frustrated in thinking you were nearly at the front only to turn back and start all over again .

We lost count of the number of rides and different "worlds" we had visited even getting Mum on a rocket ride. We had to go and shake hands with Mickey Mouse of course and get our picture taken with Goofy etc. But by the end of the day all the kids wanted to do was go back and swim n the hotel pool.

The next day we did Epcot which was amazing covering all the old and new technology and each country with its own pavilion. By pavilion I mean sometimes the size of half an acre especially the Chinese with it's Pagoda. Everything in the States was big especially here in Disney World and we said that even the sky was big. Our poor Camero packed up after a couple of days so he got a station wagon.

There were so many places to go after Disney World and fortunately Water World was close to our hotel. Then we had to go to Sea World and of course the Space Centre at Cape Canaveral. Mum got quite a scare there as one of the "dummy" space suits moved as she went up to it. The size of the Saturn rocket was just breathtaking and the pre launch building was one of the largest buildings in the world.

There were some enormous shopping malls and we bought some big fluffy cotton bath towels as planned. They had to be washed and dried before use so we popped into the local launderette and upon opening the tumble dryer an enormous pink cloud floated down the International Drive.

We eventually "did" Disney World and all or most of the other venues in Orlando and headed off to Tampa to pick up a flight to Las Vegas. The drive over there was incredible going over a bridge so long you couldn't see the other end. It wasn't a cantilever bridge just a raised road over the water. It was Easter and we had difficulty trying to find accommodation but ended up in Treasure Island and were offered what seemed to be the janitor's room next to the air condition plant. But we made some friends that night and had little party on the beach where I did my Nelson and Hardy routine to the amusement of the locals.

The next day we set off from the airport and flew to Las Vegas. You don't realise how big the USA is and how many time zones there are and as we were flying Westwards we kept going back through all these zones. We had to change at Houston after having breakfast and then got on a flight that stopped at Albuquerque and had another breakfast. The passengers were

amazed that we hadn't booked a hotel in Las Vegas as it was Easter and they would probably all be full.

At the airport we found a phone station with all the hotels and eventually found one at the end of "The Strip". The Tropicana. It was enormous and took us an hour to book in but the room was luxurious and with 4 beds. We enquired about a cabaret but were told it was semi nude so the kids couldn't come. We were all exhausted having flown some twelve hours. So we had dinner in the cabaret which was a floor show and Liverpudlian comic I'd never heard of but was obviously popular here. The waiters all looked like Mafia henchmen and you didn't want to argue with them. We crashed into our beds completely zonked and jet lagged that night

The pool was the priority the next day and a walk round the strip. We had hired another big station wagon and found the shopping mals and Penny's famous department store. We left the kids in the room and tried a casino at night and I tried my hand at the roulette wheel and came off with a 100 dollar profit and walked away. The number of one armed bandits was fascinating to watch as punters with buckets loads of tokens sat all night shovelling their money in and pulling down the arms.

We took a trip over to the boulder damn and had lunch on the side of Lake Mead, a man made lake. We had seen the Grand Canyon when we flew in which had taken twenty minutes to fly over so didn't do any trips there but promised the boys we would pay for them if they ever returned, which they did and we paid for a helicopter trip for them. We had seen such a trip on the big HIMAX screen in Orlando and that gave us vertigo. We saw Michael Jackson's thriller in 3 D and that gave everybody the screams.

We said goodbye to Nevada and set off on the road to San Diego in California through the Mojave desert driving at 50 mph all the time looking out for motorcycle speed cops hiding behind large advertising boards. We had a nice hotel in shaded trees and a swimming pool and went for a ride in a motor boat around the harbour where there was a large Naval base. We got stopped by the river police for speeding who realised we were just tourists and were let off with a warning and told to take note of the buoys. How they pronounced them I still cannot try.

The next day we started our journey north towards Monterey along the Big Sur bypassing Los Angeles and stopping off in Santa Barbara. They say the Californians shoot from the hip. They certainly didn't mess with their words and immediately asked where you came from, where you were going, how old you were, what you ate for breakfast. Etc. We went into a supermarket and a local came charging in and ran his arms around the shelves tipping all the contents off and running out laughing. Strange people.

We then stopped off at Hearst Castle, the home of a millionaire printer Randolph Hearst who built a copy of a Casa Grande, inspired by the Church of Santa María la Mayor in Ronda, Spain which I have only just discovered. We continued up the Big Sur to Carmel, where Clint Eastwood was sheriff. Then we drove round Monterey and the Pebble Beach urbanization which was a toll road. We called in to the famous Pebble beach Golf Club where all the shop assistants looked like film stars with furs and jewellery. Everything was a bit pricey so we made a hasty retreat and went looking for a restaurant owned by Ian Campbell's secretary's brother. It was idyllic. Set in a walled garden with

humming birds and ivy covered walls. And the food was to die for.

We drove down through the Napa valley, where all the vineyards are and started looking for somewhere to stop for a few days rest. We found a lovely little modern hotel in Pismo beach at a very reasonable price which we got discounted being members of the AA? It was all brass and glass, on a cliff top overlooking the pacific with a large swimming pool and terrace and health spa. They had some wedding events there which were lovely to watch from the terrace overlooking the lawn with all the guests dolled up. We went into San Luis Obispo and found a lovely little theatre run by amateurs playing old Western melodramas. It was hilarious. We rested for a few days at Pismo Beach, watching the whales in the distance and eating out at the local restaurants and then we set off back to Los Angeles to get ready for our return home but not before visiting the Queen Mary, moored at long Beach and the Spruce Goose, not forgetting the Universal Studios tour.

## **Open flying**

Back in the real world in England it was about the time of my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and my lover of flying was headed by my lovely wife who organised a flight in a Tiger Moth at a local aerodrome in Nottinghamshire. Apart from gliding, all modern gliders have canopies, not like the old Sedburghs the ones I learnt to fly in which was what you really call open flying with the wind blowing through your hair.

There was a gliding club just up the road from us in Husbands Bosworth. The name of this place bought happy memories for Fay when she worked in the telephone exchange in Scotland when putting somebody through in the old manual exchanges and Husbands Bosworth sound like "husbands balls worth" which had all the telephonists in hoots of laughter. But I managed to get a couple of lifts up in their gliders there in somewhat more modern versions of those when I did my solos in the ATC. The versions then were open and all made of wood, how the Sedbergh model ever managed to do a loop was a miracle. It was quite an experience hanging from you safety harness looking up to the earth

So these new fibre glass gliders were a lot easier to lift off and I went up with an instructor. It was lovely flying over the fields of Leicestershire but the weather was a bit dodgy. These glider boys are addicted to thermals, obviously as they do all the lifts but as I watched below I could see a thunderstorm approaching and mentioned this to the pilot. Ok, he said but then hit a thermal so turned into it to gain height. He then hit another and up we went again as the thunderstorm approached. "I think we'd best get down now don't you?" he said as I sat squirming in my seat.



The modern fibre glass glider with a canopy



The Tiger Moth and open flying



Top Gun: this was taken in a stationery jet in a museum.



My helicopter flight



**PATRIOT AVIATION**



**This certificate has been  
awarded to**

To:

Paddy O'Farrell

Who successfully took the controls of **G-JCAP**

A Robinson R22 Helicopter.

Date: 18 July 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Woodley".

Your pilot was: Peter Woodley





The old wartime Douglas DC 3 Dakota at Coventry airport that I got a flight in when it flew over the city on Remembrance Sunday dropping poppies over the parade. We flew back and as we got off the plane the other Dakota was circling to land when something fell out of it. It looked like some sort of dummy and fell onto one of the hangar roofs. It turned out it was a sky diver who's parachute failed to open but he survived only getting a broken shoulder.

Vickers Valetta



In lieu of becoming a Spitfire pilot I became an L:Fitt. G.C in the RAF but still did some flying, only as a passenger though in some ancient RAF Transport Command aircraft. My first was at Locking in an old Vickers Valetta as a short training flight. Then flying out to Hong Kong with Cyril and Taff in a Bristol Britannia although it was a chartered Eagle Airways I think, it was a turbo prop liner nick named the "whispering giant". It was a sixteen hour flight. We stopped at Istanbul and Bangkok and got told off by the steward for drinking the plane dry.



Bristol Britannia



Handley Page Hastings

We flew back from Hong Kong in an old Hastings in bucket seats for the paras. This was in the days when you were allowed to smoke on civilian flights but not in this rattling old aircraft and when we arrived at Singapore we smoked a packet in about an hour. From there we flew back via Gan in the Maldives and Tripoli in Libya all RAF staging post left over from the Second World War. My next flight was out to RAF Eastleigh or Nairobi International Airport as it eventually became known as several years later. And from there I got moved out to South Yemen, Aden in a Hawker Siddely Argosy, or the Flying Pig as it was known. Then to Sharjah in a Blackburn Beverley, an enormous heavy transport aircraft. It was for military uses only and you sat high up in the long tail part of the plane with a hole in the floor.



Hawker Siddeley Argosy

Blackburn Beverley



## **France, the Canary Islands, hotel rating and Sweden.**

While I was working with RIFA and Fay was well regarded in BAC we could afford holidays like the one in the USA. I was enjoying my time and as my own boss virtually unheeded could get on and promote the product effectively and efficiently. I usually only made 2 appointments a day as they were fairly distant which meant up early to avoid the rush hour, stop off at a Little Chef for breakfast and then call on the customer. A quick lunch and another call, write up my report with the necessary actions and with a bit of luck back home for the Magic Roundabout with the kids. Sometimes I would have to stay overnight and would try and pick a decent place to stay and give it my seal of approval.

With my super duper new Saab 90 company car we went to France for a camping holiday. We got the ferry to Caen and drove to the Loire valley and stayed the night in a camping site but in a caravan. The next day we drove south down to the Lac de la Lande. A wooded campsite by the side of a lake just below Bordeaux a few miles from the West coast. It was another wooded camp site and we were allocated a tent. It was already set up with several separate "bedrooms" or compartments. I felt it my duty to take the kids out of Fay's way to let her set up everything and she looked at me and said "where are the wardrobes?" I took the kids down to the lake a bit smartish.

It was one of the unforgettable holidays but never to be repeated. We were next to a Dutch family of giants. The daughter was the same age as Trevor but a good 12 inches taller than him. But we got on well with them as they introduced us to some fun and games

especially the water bottle game which we still play to this day.

You had to go up to the wash area for the toilets and showers and to wash the dishes. The kids fell in love with the dishwasher when they got back home. So you had to walk up there every morning with your towel and soap etc, we always chose Easter for our holidays as we could get three weekends and two days bank holidays into our holiday entitlement.

We did a brief holiday in Lanzarote but the weather there was ideal for wind surfers but a bit chilly compared to Tenerife. The pool wasn't heated and bloody freezing not having had much sun on it but we persevered and as usual met up with another family and socialise with their kids. We went to one bar where the kids could drink and as I was ordering I got talking to a young lady from Bathgate. Now I had some great times there and had actually worked behind the bar briefly much to the humour of the locals so we discussed those times and got the cold shoulder from my wife when I eventually got back with the drinks not realising how attractive my companion was.

The AA rating of hotels was purely on conveniences: TV's ; open 24 hours; a restaurant (no ratings); central heating; room service; etc but no record of the service or standard of the food. This was to come later but by then Michelin had stepped in along with other good food and service guides.

There was a Scandinavian company did an excellent list of good hotel guides which covered these items. I tried to stay in one of these within budget but also found some little gems on my travels. Martlesham Heath, the BT research HQ was one of my main calls where all new projects were being designed so I had to get in at the beginning to get my products designed in.

They were based in Ipswich and I found a lovely little family hotel near there and set about to rate it upon arrival. There were flowers and fruit in the room with plenty of toilet requisites. I was given a glass of sherry in my room before dinner and well impressed went down to the dining room.

The food was excellent and I watched each family member working efficiently and smiling and there was a young lad, a teenager who just tidied up the tables after each course. I caught his eye and asked if he had any decent port. He stopped, looked into the air for inspiration and replied. "We have a '75 Cockburns and a '77 Fonseca and I believe there is a rather nice '66 Taylors. Would you like me to get one for you sir?" That did it. 10 out of 10 for that hotel.

I had been blessed with a decent company car for all my travels: I was doing over 30,000 miles per annum so needed something reliable: I was given an old Volvo to start with until I got a new Saab 90 and after negotiations with the local Saab dealer in Ashby Parva ended up with a cool black Saab 900 with beige trim complete with a Blaupunkt stereo system. I remember driving across the Yorkshire Moors with all the windows open and the stereo on full blast listening to Nessun Dorma during the football World cup.

I had introduced "repping companies", as per Campbell Collins with GI and set up a rep in Scotland: Jim Smilie; Northern England: Tony Cortvriend; and John O'Neil in Ireland, both North and South. His wife ran a small hotel and art school in Lisdoonvarna on the West coast , a town famous for it's match making ceremonies. John was quite a character and when he picked me up from the airport in Dublin all the people would say hallo to him and then when we'd finished the business and he dropped me off at Shannon airport the

same would happen. He would seem to know everybody.

I eventually introduced a full time sales engineer into the company and used a Human Resources company with all the modern interviewing techniques and psychometric aptitude testing. There was one candidate who came through all the tests head and shoulders above everybody else but at the final interview broke down and confessed his wife put him up for the job so we ended up with the second candidate Andy Suttle who proved to be a successful employee who worked for Ericsson for many years as well as Campbell Collins and we still keep in touch where he lives in Australia.

One of the repping agencies was Phil Hart whose wife Margo worked with Fay in the telephone exchange at Kirkcaldy. He played golf at the Copt Heath club in Solihull, a very prestigious club with a beautiful club house and an excellent restaurant subsidised by the club where we would enjoy some lovely meals. At the end of each meal we had a game of guessing as to how much the meal costs because it was so cheap and subsidised and nobody except Phil ever got the right answer.

There were several world trips to some nice venues for sales meetings and to meet the other countries managers. I had to leave Fay behind to look after the plumbing that had burst as I went off to Portugal with Ian in Lisbon. Ian nearly got left behind bartering for a nice lace table cloth at the bus stop. There was the Korean representative who I immediately got on well with even though I was taking the mickey out of him in a Benny Hill Chinese voice. We ended up having dinner in the castle on the top of the city with a

fantastic view of the city lights and the bridge across the river Tagus.

We went up to Åre, a ski resort in the north of Sweden. I was asked if I had done any skiing and had been on the gentle nursery slopes at Troodos in Cyprus so they sent me down a black slope for a laugh. I ended up in Norway and had to get a bus back to the hotel. All my muscles were tied up in knots and I went for physiotherapy. She was a stunning blonde who had me naked on her bench and had me in agony. I managed to ride on the skidoos which was fun riding through the forests and on a frozen lake doing 40 mph.



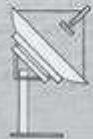
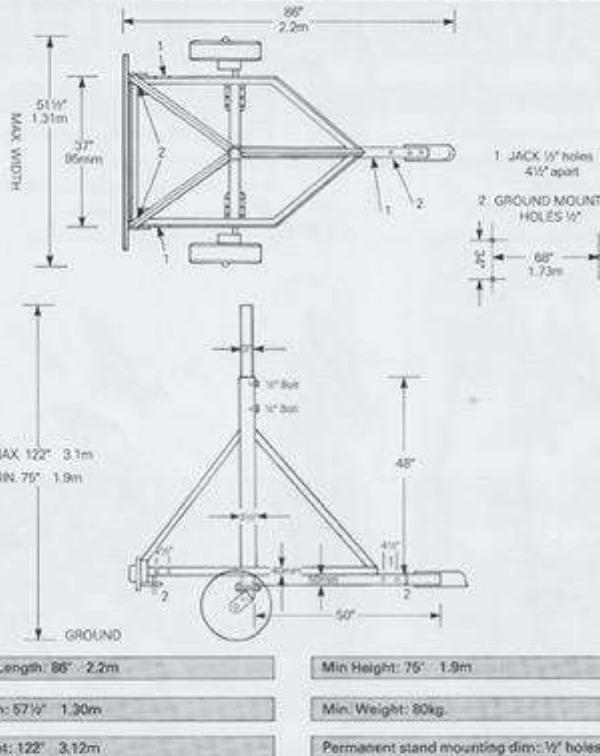


There was another resort on the side of a river with rapids and then we went to Helsinki in a ferry for another meeting. As soon as we left Stockholm the Swedes went berserk with the duty free booze on board. I went to my cabin around 2 o'clock and went to bed. I was rudely awoken by a horrific banging on the side of the boat and eventually realised it was the ice, so not much sleep that night. We got off at Helsinki and did a quick walk about the city but it was bitterly cold and returned to the boat for a sauna and a refreshing cold dip afterwards.

I was leading the world sales figures outside Sweden, ahead of the States and my turnover had reached over a million pounds. I felt that I was running the business on my own and so started a little self employed project. I had met somebody in Ireland who had a satellite business and I set up a small company

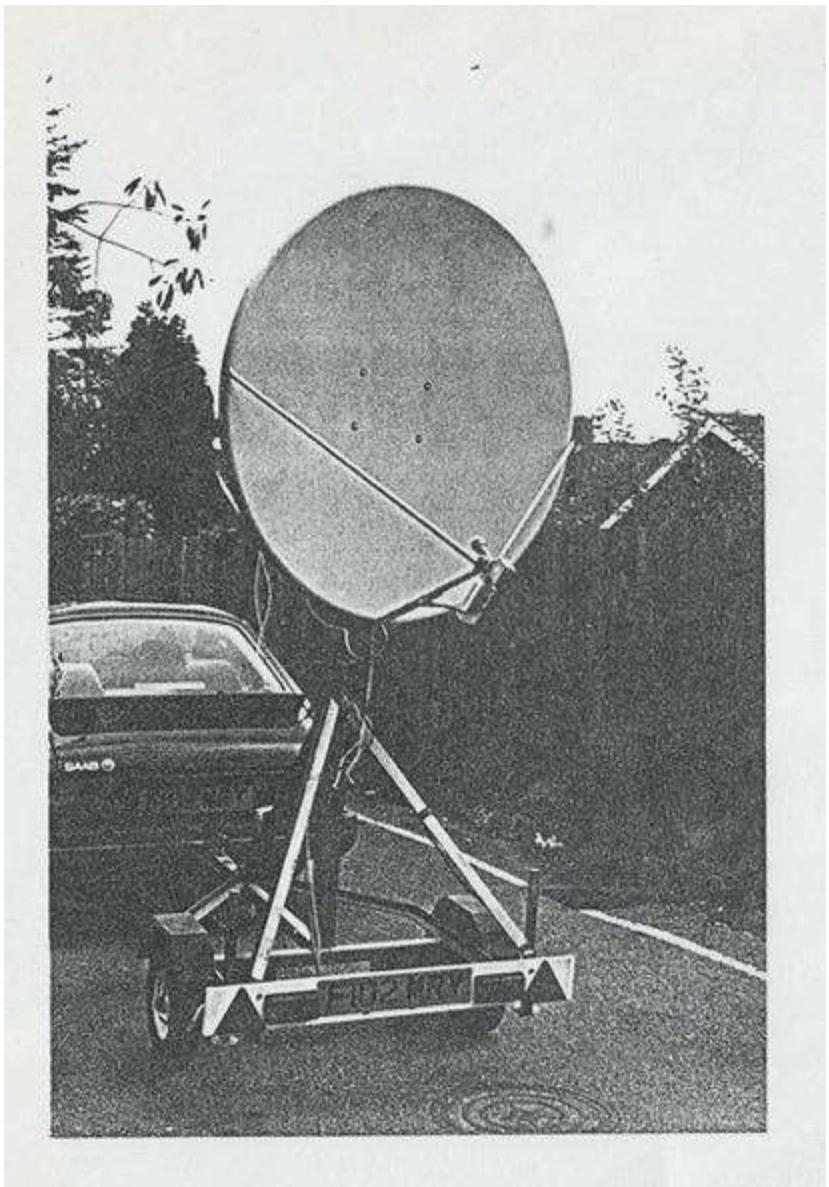
selling satellite TV. This was long before Sky appeared in the scene. I had a 1.6 metre dish with a motorised arm that could follow all the satellites on the Clark Belt geostationary orbits. I designed a trailer and with a generator could give demonstrations. A lot of people found it difficult to realise I was getting signals from space and thought it a trick, looking for the hidden cables for terrestrial TV. Eventually Sky launched the Astra satellite and introduced 90cm aerials which i couldn't compete with.

## DIMENSIONS:



**CENTRAL  
SATELLITE  
SYSTEMS**

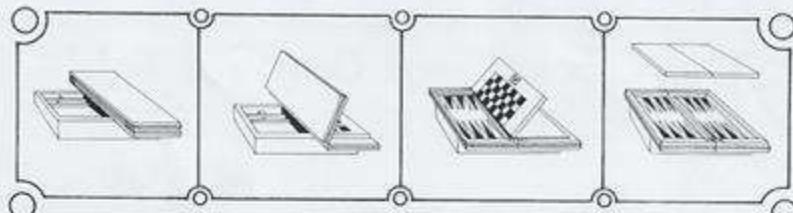
P.O. BOX 18 LUTTERWORTH  
LEICESTERSHIRE LE17 4FH  
Telephone: (04555) 3118



My next project was the Traditional Gaming Furniture Company. With the help of a bridge colleague Pen, who was a master carpenter I designed and built a multi functional table for chess, backgammon and cards as well as a coffee table. I got the design patents for the table and started making them in the garage. I had

the bases made in Smith's Timber at the top of our road and with the help of a fellow mini rugby coach who ran a kitchen design workshop managed to successfully produce a quality product. I got the inlay from a chap in Hatfield, the legs from a timber company already carved and I just sanded them down and varnished them.

I found a young lad who made violins to help me and we started selling the tables with a bit of help from Bob Jones who did the advertising for us in some up market homes and garden magazines. We had considerable interest but my colleague left and then the market crashed and I couldn't afford to carry on.



#### FEATURES:

- **OCCASIONAL TABLE:** 2'x1"x23". Ideal in the hall or office for telephones or fax machines, or in the living room or lounge for flowers, ornaments, aquarium etc. Plus useful storage space.
- **COFFEE TABLE:** 2'x2"x22". In seconds it transforms to a beautiful mahogany polished top coffee table, heat resistant, for many uses as a centrepiece of your room.
- **CHESS TABLE:** Turn the coffee table top over for a beautiful hand crafted veneered inlaid chess board, professionally finished with a hardwearing lacquer for years of enjoyment for amateurs or grand masters.
- **BACKGAMMON:** Lift the chess board up to reveal this exquisite piece of inlay veneers of Fiddleback Sycamore and American Walnut. A fascinating game, learnt in minutes for all the family.
- **10 YEAR GUARANTEE:** Full warranty, plus easy assembly instructions.  
N.B. Due to an on going Quality Control programme, some minor design changes may be noticed.

#### ALSO AVAILABLE:

- **FREE BACKGAMMON BOOKLET:** Instructions and tactical advice to turn the novice into a professional in minutes. From setting up the board to opening moves.
- **BACKGAMMON SET:** 2 pairs of dice and a doubling die, together with 2 sets of matching stones to fit the board. (see price list)
- **CHESS SET:** Traditional hand carved, wooden Staunton chess pieces made to measure the 2" squares, max height app. 3½" high, weighted. (see price list)
- **ENGRAVED BRASS PRESENTATION PLAQUE:** Your own wording for that special occasion: Silver/Gold wedding anniversaries; Xmas; Retirements; Business awards; University graduations, etc.



*the Traditional Gaming Furniture Co.*

17 Misterton Way  
Lutterworth  
Leics. LE17 4AB

Tel: 0455 556002  
Fax: 0455 553118

## The Occasional Gaming Table



The ultimate personal or business gift, for somebody close, at Xmas; birthdays or anniversaries. A perfect Wedding present or business incentive gift for the rewards of hardwork or loyalty. This gift will never be forgotten and kept with pride for generations.

A beautifully designed piece of original classic furniture has been production engineered by an English Master Carpenter for simplicity, multi-faceted operation and long lasting use. An on-going Quality Control programme monitors the selection of kiln-dried woods: Brazilian mahogany; Beech and specially selected veneers, to give strength and durability. A welcome piece of traditional furniture in any room, it mixes classical design with high technology to give a hard wearing, long lasting finish for a lifetime's aesthetic satisfaction in all its many modes of operation.

A QUALITY, FULLY GUARANTEED BRITISH PRODUCT



Patent Office Design Registration No 201446



## CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION OF DESIGN

Number of Registration 2018846

Date of Registration 25th April 1991

Date of grant of Certificate 2nd September 1991



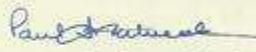
This is to certify that,

in pursuance of and subject to the provisions of the Registered Designs Act 1949, the Design, of which a representation or specimen is attached, has been registered as of the date of registration shown above in the name of

PATRICK GERSHON O'FARRELL

in respect of the application of such design to:

An occasional games table



Registrar of Designs

Please read the important notes overleaf.

DRI/ORD/ACD

At this time RIFA sold off the capacitor division and Kevin Dawson who had started RIFA several years ago got the sack for cooking the books. We had enjoyed a good time in the early days but he was a bit of a womaniser and was having an affair with Joan his secretary who had introduced me to Judith. Kevin's wife, who had a nickname of the Black Widow was quite happy with his little peccadilloes as long as he bought her a diamond after every affair. The other secretary was a Joan as well. Stunning blonde middle aged lady who worked for the microelectronics division. She was great fun and we had some memorable nights in the Italian restaurant, Quo Vadis in Coventry.



Xmas lunch with RIFA at the Quo Vadis Italian restaurant, Coventry: Judith, me, Joan the Micro division bloke, forgotten his name, the other Joan Boardman and Kevin Dawson.



So after nine years it all went pear shaped as I found an advert for my job in a trade magazine. I reckon I had a mini stroke then and was obviously totally traumatised and to this day still don't realise why I had been given the chop. But I was offered a six months tax free salary package and felt it was time to move on and try something on my own. I think it had something to do with politics as when Kevin left I had to do a lot of the office administration. My Power Products division was the smaller of the two with microelectronics the largest division and I think they didn't like being bossed about in the office by me. I tried to fire the accountant who reported to Sweden but was causing problems with the office staff so I don't think that went down very well either.

In the start of the nineties I was unemployed. So what do you do? You go to university. I had always wanted to some sort of management position but felt that I lacked the most important thing to the step up. A degree.

Trevor and I had started sub aqua lessons in the pool in Lutterworth as I asked around and was speaking to some Welsh gentleman in Coventry University. I had

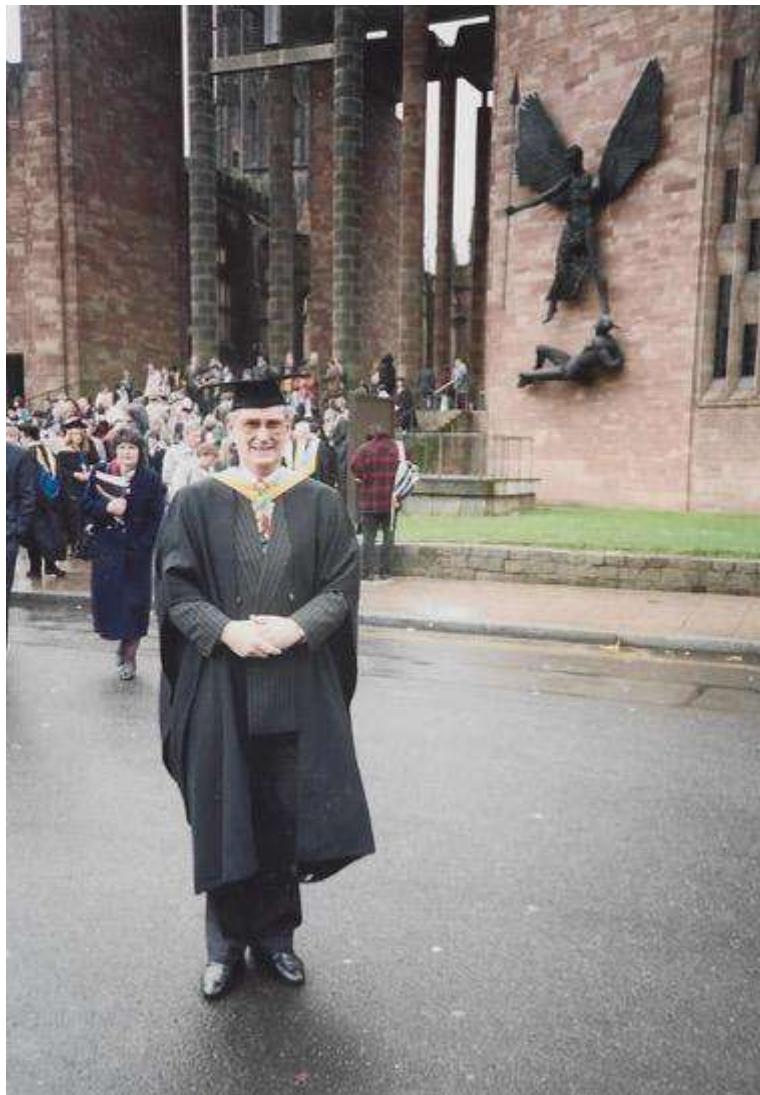
some general questions about some sort of business study course and the next thing I know, in a broad Welsh accent I get “see you Tuesday then, is it?”

So I started on a Business Administration degree course, I took all my paperwork and got enrolled the following week. I had to forego my sub aqua course but was now quite excited and a little worried about being an old codger amongst the pack of young fresh students. I was the oldest but there were several middle aged students with me amongst some twenty and thirty year olds. We had to do several modules: accounting; recruitment; personnel; economics; company law and I settled into the routine of the classes. Having had years of work experience I could relate to most of the curriculum and was asked for help by the younger class members.

There was an amusing weekend away on a personnel and recruitment course in an old manor just outside Coventry and we had two young external students join us as guinea pigs. They got free food and lodging and took advantage of the free drinks getting really plastered at night but being young they had resilience ready for the next day's project.

On the Friday night we got put into groups as the panel of interviewers, making questions ready to obtain as much information as possible and there were four of us and we split the questions equally ready for the next morning. The interviewee arrived and sat down opposite the panel and the first member of our panel picked up the CV and looked at it and said it was very good and he had got the job. The rest of the panel looked at him in horror as I jumped in saying that there were a few more questions we would like to ask.

I thoroughly enjoyed the course and was duly graduated in Coventry Cathedral with Fay and Antony present. I was only a BA Bachelor of Arts and most of the class stayed on for another year to get a BSc but I couldn't afford that unfortunately being on the dole.



Graduation at Coventry Cathedral

## **Self improvement**

After 14 barren years of education and self indulgence in the RAF I decided it was time to start on a voyage of self improvement. I did the City and Guilds course at Witney Technical College then the Business Studies course at Aylesbury College of Further Education. Then followed a series of in house company sales training courses and numerous Microsoft and other software courses: Unix SCO v386; Adobe and Dreamweaver; City and Guilds Desktop Publishing 1 and 2; and C & G in Computers for Telecommunication Technicians.

Once I was established in a sales career I went on a Sales Management course run by TACK and then an interesting Time Management course, another 3 day course in London. This was run by a Danish gentleman who invented the Filo Fax system. On the first day he introduced himself to the class and asked "how do you eat an elephant?." That woke everybody up as we all looked at each other in bewilderment. The answer was that you just started at one end and got on with it. This was his philosophy about work and the end result was to lower the stress levels.

So you had to write down all your thoughts and ideas and plans for the future. This obviously included your appointments and sales forecasts but it also included all your family details with dates for birthdays, anniversaries etc. It was a full plan of your life and it all ended up written down in this handy little filing system. The trouble was that if you lost it you were buggered. My problem that evolved was that although it definitely did lower the stress levels it also relaxed the memory cells in your brain. I blame him for my descent into dementia.

I progressed with my self improvement plan which eventually ended up in Coventry University but along the way I felt bound to join some professional institutions and add some highfalutin' letters after my name. With all my bits of paper that I had now gathered and my work experience I was accepted as a fellow in the Institute of Professional Business and Technical Management.

With my work experience and training in sales and marketing I was also accepted as a fellow of the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management. After I'd been made redundant I found when applying for a job that I was now over aged and over qualified.

President and Founder: H. J. MANNERS, C. Eng., M.I.C.E., F.I.Mech.E., F.A.S.A., F.I.Prof.E., F.I.Prim.E., F.I.Mar.E.  
F.I.C.M., F.I.M.L., F.I.Found.T.M., M.I.C.E., M.I.Mech.E.

# Professional Business and Technical Management

Incorporating  
Industrial, Computing, Technological and Associated Management



BUSINESS

TECHNICAL

## PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT DIPLOMA

THIS DIPLOMA CERTIFIES THAT

PATRICK GERSON O'FARRELL (DIP.BTM.) FOUNDER FELLOW

Has been elected a FELLOW of  
PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT

THIS 16th DAY OF SEPTEMBER 1985

SIGNED

G. STOCKDALE, C. Eng., M.I.Mech.E., P.I.M.S.,  
F.I.Prof.B.T.M., F.I.C.M., M.R.Aus., C.Eng.

VICE-CHAIRMAN  
OF Prof.B.T.M.

G. STOCKDALE,  
Vice-Chairman of the National Executive Council, also  
Education Advisor to the Council.

SIGNED

C.ENG., P.I.M.S., M.I.C.E., F.I.Mech.E., F.I.Prof.E.,  
F.I.C.M., P.I.Found.T.M., F.I.Mar.E., F.I.Prim.E., M.I.T.E.

FOUNDER AND  
HONORARY  
SECRETARY AND  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OF MEMBERSHIP  
COUNCIL OF  
Prof.B.T.M.

H. J. MANNERS,  
Honorary Chairman of the Management Education and  
Examination Council.



This Diploma must be returned to Prof.B.T.M. on cessation of Membership.

Registered Diploma No. 695

This Diploma should be retained by the Holder and presented when required.

Professional Business and Technical Management,  
58, Clarendon Avenue, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 4SA,  
England.



# The Institute of Sales Management

Incorporating the Institution of Sales Engineers

This is to certify that

P.G.O'Farrell.

Has been elected a Member of the Institute

President

Chairman

Director-General

Date

*J. K. Dunn*  
*W. H. Bell*  
*Ron P. White*

1<sup>st</sup> January, 1979.



## **Self employed and unemployed.**

The satellite business was doomed with the start of Sky and the introduction of 90cm dishes and Fay had started a sun bed hiring company which she had to sell as she was now fully involved with BAC. The gaming furniture company was broke and then I found a trading company in Taiwan who had offered to make the tables for me but then asked if I would be an agent for their other business of making golf club component parts.

I managed to get another sales job with another power supply company which didn't last long as they wanted a young buck who could do ten appointments a day. Bugger that! So I got talking to one of our close friends Irene and Tony Harper. He was an excellent golfer who played for the county and had just been made redundant as well, so we got our heads together and started the TT partnership. We bought the component parts for golf clubs from this Taiwanese company, read a book about making clubs and off we went. We used my garage initially and at the end of 1991 we took Fay's little Ford Fiesta and filled it full of boxes of golf clubs and drove up to Donnington market on a Sunday at 5 o'clock in the morning and came back with £200 in our pockets.

We couldn't believe our luck and so a partnership was formed and we called our golf clubs TT Par and had graphite shafts made with our own name on and we traded for four years. We didn't become millionaires but brought in enough to cover the basic essentials while Fay's income covered the mortgage and electricity etc. I registered on the dole and got 40 pounds a week which added to the income and I actually showed them the books of the golf club business which of course didn't make a profit. Meanwhile I got government

assistance with training and went on a Microprocessor course run by Intec in Rugby.

Fay's company BAC were looking for an IT assistant so I applied and got the job and went on several more training courses over a period of 4 years ending up being trained on UNIX and all the database software to run the membership programme. I was backed up with professional software companies and had to travel around a lot getting trained on their specific products. One company was based in Bristol and I got taken out to watch Bath rugby in the hospitality suite. I had to go to Chesham to visit one company and had to sit at a meeting with an extremely attractive young lady with a vast frontage hardly hidden by clothing and couldn't concentrate at all and don't know how anyone could get any work done with her in the same office.

I eventually hired a young IT girl who knew more about IT than I did so I moved aside and concentrated on setting BAC's web site and got more training on more software such as Dreamweaver and publishing graphic design software. I thoroughly enjoyed this work as it tied in with my artistic bent.

We became great friends with one of Fay's printer suppliers, James Fear and he dragged us screaming to the hospitality suite at Northampton Rugby club. We had some great times there with him and met his family and girl friend and eventually ended up in the South of France at his wedding. But that's another story. Meanwhile there was a lot of political upheaval at BAC and I had to get out of the way to let Fay get on with her project of getting rid of the incumbent Chief Executive which involved some rather nasty encounters.

I came across a company looking for IT consultants who were self employed and offered them full technical backup on a commission basis . They were based in Bury St Edmunds and it seemed like a good idea but meant putting up some capital. Unfortunately the Department of Trade took a dim view of the set up and shut it down leaving a lot of people out of pocket. I lost about £10,000 which Fay managed to find and so I was unemployed again.

I got a job in the office of a cement company just outside Shawell doing spreadsheets but had a clash of personalities with the boss, a lady nicknamed the Rottweiler. I quickly moved on to the first temping job available at a logistics company on a disused airfield moving cars about. I couldn't quite work out what it was all about; all I had to do was jump in a car and move it to another part of the parking lot. This usually involved dragging the battery trolley and jump starting the car in freezing conditions. I think a lot of the cars were used in sales presentations and processions. Mostly UK types, Range Rovers, large saloons. I met some interesting characters, one of whom sailed round the world every summer and came back to earn some money in the Winter. I lost half a stone in the first few months, jumping in and out of cars.

This was a particular interesting if not profitable part of my career as I was involved in a wide range of activities. I came across a Frenchman who set up a factory in Coventry making reusable nappies. This was the start of the green era and there was a feeling that the amount of used nappies going into landfill sites would generate a lot of methane gas. So I visited a lot of house wives demonstrating my washable nappies.

The next person I came across, not being able to find a proper job as I was either too old or

overqualified, was somebody setting up the Leicestershire Good Food and Leisure Guide. I got on well with him and it wasn't long before I set up a recruitment conference in a hotel in Leicester for agents and we got off with a flying start. We would go to a restaurant or hotel and tell them we had been given a good report from somebody and would they like to put an advert in our glossy magazine which would be posted to numerous post codes around the county.

I got several people signed up including the Greyhound Hotel in Lutterworth. The boss actually paid for me and Fay's flights to Tenerife for a brief holiday. We couldn't afford it but could stay in Ian and Delia's apartment of course. We went on a lot of Time Share presentations where you would be refunded your transport costs.

My next temping job was at Moreton Educational Furnishers, a company in Nuneaton. It was a strange set up making desks and chairs for schools and also they made small living modules for cheap accommodation for essential workers such as the police, firemen, doctors, nurses teachers etc who worked in central London. One of my tasks there was to organise a stripper for one of the worker's birthdays. I remember doing one for Jan at BAC. A tall blonde fireman who performed in the car park and giving the ladies including Jan a lot of enjoyment.

My next job was in Watford Gap working for a construction company making wire reinforcement mesh and everything needed for ground work before setting up the building. PrePour Services. I was introduced to find out where all the building projects in the area were and call on the site manager to offer our products before they started work on site. I had to learn a lot

about the products and find out who the planners where for each building project.

As we were great friends with James Fear, one of Fay's suppliers we got invited to his bachelor do at Shawell. He talked about the wedding in the South of France and asked us if we could fill in for some of his relatives who couldn't make it. Well, we were flabbergasted and even though we really couldn't afford it felt it was too good an opportunity to miss. We had been to Stratford upon Avon previously and I found a rather cool white suit made by Kendo which was priced at some ridiculous price of about six hundred pounds but was reduced to two hundred and bugger me, it fitted like a glove. But what the hell would I want with a cool white suit?



Cote d Azur at James' wedding

It was my birthday a few days later after we had talked to James and, bugger me, the white suit turned up! Fay had called the shop and done a deal with them so off to the sunny South of France we went. We flew into Nice and hired a car and drove along some picturesque shores down to a small coastal village just off the main road but hidden behind the trees. It was

enchanting and our hotel was right on the beach. So we booked in and I was talking in French to the receptionist not realising it using some long forgotten O Level French. Not that I passed.

The wedding party was split into two hotels on the beach with the main hotel the other side of the road to host the reception and wedding breakfast. The ceremony was held in a church in the local town by a black vicar with a sore throat. So we all dressed up in our finery and made the procession to the church, the weather was perfect and that finished, we drove back in convoy hooting our car horns and arriving back at the hotel, parked and walked to the reception. This had accumulated a crowd and a lady, who we found out I came from Canada asked us if we were film stars. Me in my white suit. We disappointed her and walked past the crowd feeling like film stars and a great night was had by everybody.

The world cup was on and we had to watch the England match on in the next door hotel's beach bar the next day after breakfasting on the beach and savouring each day before returning to reality. Poor James in very unlucky in love as his marriage to the beautiful Lisa which didn't last long and he has since tried again but with little success but now has a lovely family of two girls.

We had lived in Greenacres Drive for six years now and felt the need to move to somewhere larger, Greenacres was a large housing estate which had the advantage of meeting lots of people and making lots of friends but the disadvantage was the lack of privacy so we looked around and found Trevant, 17 Misterton Way, Luttwewroth. It wasn't called Trevant just yet and the chap who owned it wanted to down size so we did a swap which saved us a lot of money in solicitor's fees

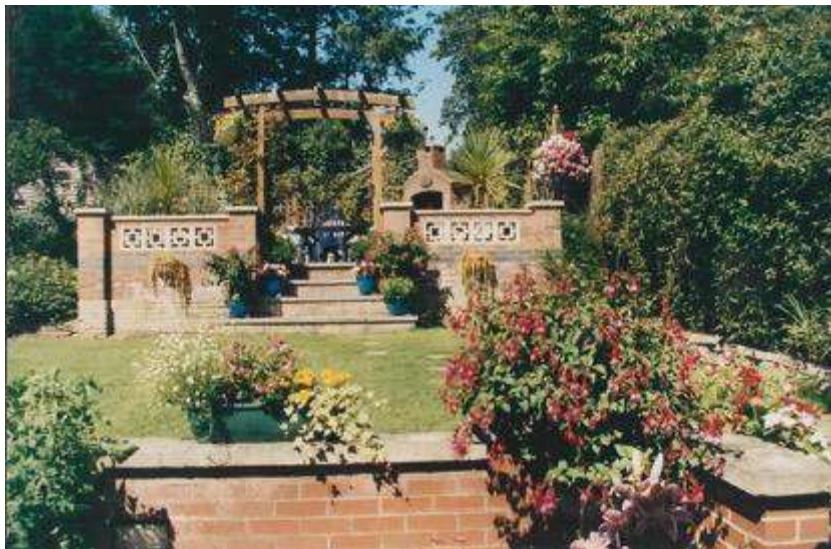
and other duties. It was down the side of the post office so it was only a few minutes to the town centre and it was in a cul de sac and nice and quiet. It led down to what was jokingly called Rye Hills, a bump in a field where people would go tobogganing in the winter. From there through an old railway tunnel you could follow the path to Misterton across a bridge over the M1 motorway. The river Swift, a euphemism for a river, was along the side of the field although in the rainy season it did flood down by the main road.

It wasn't a particularly pleasant looking house but had a large garden to the rear and plenty of room for enlargement which we did adding a conservatory to the rear and enlarging the lounge. It was ideal for the boys when they reached the age of drinking as it was close to all the main drinking facilities in town of which Koggies was their favourite which was on the other side of our back garden wall. It obviously was in easy walking distance of the schools as well.

We lived there for twenty years and it was famous for it's parties especially barbeques on the back lawn in our own built and designed bbq furnace. We had some friends Paula and Joe from London staying with us one weekend and she woke up one morning and said she saw some tramps sleeping in our back garden. It was Trevor and a pal, too drunk to make it to the bedrooms, sleeping on the sun beds next to the barbecue.



Trevant , 17 Misterton Way, Lutterworth.



The rear garden at Trevant in full flower with the  
barbeque at the top

## **Time shares, Sorrento and Spain**

Meanwhile after savouring the sales pitch of Time Shares, a new type of time share was introduced which was based on a point system which meant you weren't tied to any one apartment (even though it was possible to swap) this meant you could pick and choose where to go, so we went up to somewhere close to the National Arboretum in Staffordshire in a hotel spa and resort centre with gardens and nine hole golf course. We were initiated and bought some shares and had a slap up Sunday lunch and walked round the estate. They had apartments all around the Mediterranean and the Canary Islands. We talked to other users who obviously didn't have a bad word for any of the resorts.

We talked this over with Peter and Shirley and came to the conclusion that if four of us used an apartment it would be a lot more cost effective so they signed up as well and off we went on our first time share holiday. We stayed at the Golf de Sur in Tenerife close to Ian and Delia's apartment and so knew the area well and showed Peter and Shirley all the island. Of course booze and fags were cheap there and apart from Shirley we all smoked and I smoked cigars. As well as the Golf del Sur apartments we stayed in the Santa Barbara complex which was close to the golf courses and a stroll down to the shore, a bit rocky but a pleasant walk along the coastal path. We had a lot of laughs especially with Shirley buying a diamond ring. Unfortunately she hadn't notified the bank that she was in Tenerife so we had to use Fay's credit card, and Peter wasn't amused as Shirley hadn't asked him for permission to buy it.

Menorca was our favourite where we stayed in an apartment right on the beach in a little bay which meant a quick swim in the sea or use the infinity pool

next to the club bar and restaurant. We played bridge every night with the help of gin and tonics or Harvey wall bangers and of course a nice duty free Havana cigar. The down fall was that the local shop was up a long flight of steps up a hill. But then the shoe factory shops made up for all that together with the leather and clothes shops. I still have shoes from Menorca to this day and a beautiful cloth and leather golf jacket I got just before Peter tried to buy it.

We made friends with a two old couples from Essex and drove them around in the Ford galaxy we had hired. We usually went in May which was the start of the season and some of the restaurants weren't open yet but still managed to drive around the island to find a decent place to eat. We got some feedback from some of the other time share people or did a little bit of investigating on our own.

1996 and it was our silver wedding anniversary. One of Fay's old telephonist friends Janis had married an Italian, Fabio Florentino who was part owner of a five star hotel in Sorrento, the Excelsior Vittorio on the Amalfi coast overlooking the bay of Naples and Mount Vesuvius and she organised a booking for us in June. The hotel featured in the film "Avanti" with Jack Lemon and Juliette Mills. Another of the "Call Girls" Maureen joined us for this trip to keep the numbers even.

I sat next to a self important gentleman on the flight full of himself and his Italian connections and at the airport car park he was well pissed off as he got into his pathetic Fiat and watched us get into the hotel's Mercedes limousine.

The hotel was really beautiful, on a cliff overlooking the bay with a lift down to the sea front promenade. Fabio made us very welcome and took us

out on tours of the local places of interest. We got the hydro jet ferry along the coast stopping at Portafino for lunch then to Capri. That was stunningly beautiful as we got a bus up to the top and walked around the shops looking at all the artist's work depicting the blue green waters of the coastal regions. The shops were a little bit too expensive for our liking. Fabio took us to a restaurant along the coast overlooking the Mediterranean that made all their own vegetables and local liqueurs as well. There was a wedding in progress there and the bride wore a lovely white wedding dress with trainers.

We had some lovely romantic evenings on the terrace dancing the night away in the moonlight and the current top record at the time was "Moon over Sorrento" sung by Tina Arena which always brings back happy memories every time we hear it. The swimming pool was big enough for me to do my lengths and usually empty. The hotel entrance was in the middle of the town and we could walk there and have an evening meal in the plaza, a pizza was favourite but our anniversary evening was perfect with a lovely meal and personal waiter service on the hotel terrace overlooking the waters of the Bay of Naples. We met a lovely couple who joined us and they were in the police and we really enjoyed their company as they were well impressed with the amount of personal service we got thanks to Fabio.



Over looking Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples  
rom the balcony of the hotel



Enjoying the luxury of the hotel.



Mario's wife Janis with me and Maureen on the balcony over looking the bay of Naples and Fay and I being looked after by the Maitre'd.



This was when we started looking for property for our retirement and fell in love with Menorca. What with all the green fields and the cows it was like the UK on a good summer's day. We went to a property exhibition in the NEC Birmingham and started making enquiries. At one stand we had a long conversation about our retirement home and he was interested in why we wanted to go to Menorca. After our explanations we said "OK but it shuts down for six months of the year. Have you ever considered Spain?"

This was in the time of the Estate Agent's free weekend holidays, so we jumped on board the wagon so to say and took advantage of their generosity. Our first excursion was a disaster ending up in a tiny Peugeot 203 with no air conditioning being driven by someone who ran into the back of a car outside his office and who hadn't made any plans or appointments so we ended up back in his office and the boss lady handed us over to an ex wiz kid in the stock market running a beaten up old BMW. We got dragged up from Torrevieja to somewhere north of Alicante in mid July. Not the sort of start we had envisaged.

Then our adventure started with Sandro who was Finnish with an Italian father. He was quite a character and we got to know him well over a period of a few years. He rolled up at Malaga airport late but then drove us along the coast road going West and all we saw were building site cranes everywhere so asked him to drive inland and we ended up in Coin. We had a good feel about the place but felt we needed to see a bit more of Spain before we decided where to put our roots down.

I had by this time found a place where I actually enjoyed the work. The Royal Air Force Association. It was based in Belgrave, north of Leicester in a

predominantly Asian community. I had actually been in the same building when it was the Royal British Legion HQ and went for an interview when they wanted someone to go round all the branches taking verbatim records of all the branch meetings.

But it was now the HQ of RAFA and I was taken on as a temp to upgrade the membership data base. So I had to manually put all their members on to a spread sheet to be able to mail them. After a few months I was given a full time contract and took on the role of telephone receptionist, as well as looking after the rubbish, collecting the VIP's from the station at Leicester and I had to set up a new PABX telephone exchange system which meant talking to all the suppliers and trying to work out which one was most adaptable to our needs. Also I had to organise the ATC (Air Training Corps) flying scholarships. This was a yearly event sorting out all the entrants and sending down the data to a consultant committee in London. Once the winners had been selected I then had to contact their nearest flying club and set up lessons for them. I also had to help to out with various air shows and liaise with the Red Arrows to fit them into the air show schedules.

Every year the RAFA had an annual conference which meant contacting all the RAFA Clubs and associations and using my calligraphic skills sending out invites to all the VIPs. There were various associations within the RAFA such as the motorcycle association and I had to go down to RAF Cranwell the famous officer training college which was extremely interesting. I was really enjoying my time at RAFA until the membership director, whom I had met at his home and in Spain while on holiday, came into my office one day and started to verbally abuse me for no apparent reason.

I was then moved from membership and worked in the secretary's office from then on. The boss was a Group Captain who flew Vulcans and had a brother who flew Lightnings and he had some lovely tales about a training exercise they had in Cyprus testing their dog fight capabilities which of course the Vulcan won being far more manoeuvrable. Working at the Vulcan site in Bruntingthorpe at weekends I got to know some of those involved in getting it back to flying capabilities and Taff Stone was the Chief Engineer in charge of the operations and I met him in RAFA as well. Unfortunately it was after I had left for Spain that it lifted off and the massive roar of the four Olympus engines were heard over Leicestershire.

It was about this time just after the millennium that we started looking for our retirement home in Spain. We went to one of our time shares in Fuengirola with Peter and Shirley and during our two week stay pinched the hire car and started on our grand tour. We drove off up to the Alpaharas first which was very beautiful but in the middle of nowhere. One of the estate agents in Orgiva or more probably a relative of the house we were going to view took us in his old Ford which could never had passed any MOT test in a month of Sundays. We then made our way to Murcia and found a lovely little town just outside Granada but it didn't have any properties for sale. We stayed in a converted Convent on our way which was so tranquil and peaceful you could understand how the nuns enjoyed their time there.

We had been going to Spanish lessons at Rugby College and met someone there who had a place in Torrevieja so that was next on our tour. They had a place in an urbanisation which was mostly Brits with a pub and a small supermarket. They took us to meet some of their friends who had a townhouse and we had

a beer in their "front garden" which was about two metres from the road. They had been there for several years and hadn't moved outside the urbanisation.

There was a lovely little town just up the road called San Miguel which we really liked but they hadn't even been there. Our next drive was up to a funny little place called Los Angeles where we met the owner of a house just next to a shop. He came out in his pyjamas and showed us around. It has two buildings and he was very proud of showing us a water junction under a pile of rags which was obviously an illegal junction off the mains which gave him free water. His wife came out in her pyjamas and was quickly shooed away.

We weren't getting anywhere in our search so turned back and stayed in a hotel called Las Vegas which was disgusting, the sheets looked like they hadn't been changed since the last occupants and the window looked out into a brick wall. I had a quick shower there before we left in a hurry and found another hotel.

Poor Peter and Shirley weren't happy bunnies doing without a car as we continued our holiday. Sandro then took us up to Coin and into El Rodeo and we bumped into a Brit with a paper under his arm going into a villa with a *Se Vende* sign and Sandro asked him if we could look around. He had had a bad time with an estate agent and initially refused Sandro's request but he smooth talked him into letting us in. We had a walk round and just kept looking at each other and nodding without saying a word and discovered it had two plots and was above our budget but Sandro suggested we could build on the top plot and let the house out so we agreed a price of 200,000 Euros, this was when the exchange rate was 1.50 Euros to the pound. We had found our dream home at last.

We took Peter and Shirley up to see out new home and celebrated with Sandro in a blow out in La Higuera restaurant in Benelmadena. Poor Sandro didn't get any agent's commission but we did give him a thousand Euros compensation. This was the lowest commission of his office and I had sold him two golf club sets as well. He made up for it on our celebration night out by drinking nearly a bottle of brandy. How he drove home that night we'll never know.

## **Cuba and our villa in Spain.**



This was in September 2013 and we paid the deposit and returned home with Peter and Shirley. In December we returned to Spain and started the purchase procedure which involved sitting in the Notary's office with two solicitors counting out the "Black money" which was illegal and was used to reduce the capital gains tax involved.

So on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2013 we now owned our little dream home in Spain. The top garden was a mess, it was typical Spanish tat, all little paths and rockeries and trees. The Spanish like the shade and the inside of the house was designed to be cool as well. There was a barbeque area with a tin roof in the top corner of the garden and a "swimming pool" which was a converted septic tank about 6 foot square and ten foot deep.

The house was in quite good nick but the outside shed which had been used as an artist's studio needed

refurbishing and the asbestos roof replaced. All in good time as we were both working so had only minimum time to spend on any major building projects. Fay and Maureen went over in the following February and started filling the house with furniture and so our little villa started to take shape and we had a holiday home if nothing else.

But we still had to go to work and Fay was now heavily involved on strategic projects of which one involved building a new office for BACP in Lutterworth. Obviously there was a lot of rumours flying about of her being able to see the new office from our bedroom window and complaints about having to move all of seven miles! But she enjoyed the cuts and thrust of the project which dragged Mick Whittley into the bargain helping out in his electrical role, explaining the difference between inches and centimetres to Fay who was now issued with a Hi Viz jacket and helmet together with a pair of willies for site visits.

We still had holidays in other parts of the world: Fay and Maureen going over to New York in December enjoying the sights and sounds of the big city and the big shops and the big limousines. I had a quick week in Cuba with Thompsons Kuoni flying out in Cuban Airways. The flight attendants were more minders than stewardesses and the service was minimal to say the least. We stopped off at a lovely little island just off Cuba to drop off a few eco tourists visiting the national park and I visited the airport toilet. Out jumped a salsa band serenading me as I peed.

This was the first taste of Cuba, wherever you went there was salsa music. Anyway we made the short hop to Havana and got picked up in the coach. As I was the only person on my own the tour guide came and sat down beside me and asked me what I wanted to do. I

explained that I wanted to visit all the cigar companies and so she arranged to pick me up later during the week. We got dropped off at the Hemingway Marina hotel complex overlooking the marina. This was on the outskirts of Havana in a designated tourist compound which meant the locals were not allowed in there, only the workers of the hotel and shop. It was all a bit strange and even stranger as I sat outside relaxing watching a taxi stop outside our block and a young lady getting out and walking straight towards me. She stopped and asked me if I would like to go out with her. I was taken aback and spluttered a quick no as she then turned on to an old man sitting next to me and dragged him off in the taxi where another woman was waiting. I don't know what happened to him but I presume he must have enjoyed himself.

I had booked several tours and had to get up early the next morning and got picked up in a minibus and squeezed into the last seat in the back and off we went to the West and a ride in boat underground in some cave. We stopped off for a coffee break and I managed to find a shed where they made some cigars. We passed fields of stacks of tobacco and the sheds they dried the leaves in.

Back to the hotel and out to the famous night club, the Tropicana. I was picked up again in a coach full of Germans with a relieved guide glad of someone who spoke English. We arrived at the nightclub situated in the middle of the bush; the stage was set in the forest amongst the trees. The guide told me that as I was on my own, all single men would be given a red rose on their table for the dancers to be able to come and get us up to dance on stage and I should then wait afterwards and the dancers would come and join us for a drink. Hey ho! The show was sensational and true enough I got picked out with all the other single men

and dragged on to the stage to join in the fun and frolics. I returned to my seat eagerly awaiting the close of the show and to be joined by a showgirl. The show finished and then the guide came up to me informing me that the bloody Germans wanted to go back to their hotel and so we had to get back on to the coach. Hey ho! You can't win them all.

The next evening I asked a taxi driver where the action was and he took me to the Cosmopolitan hotel where there was a long queue of girls. He told me to just walk into the hotel to the bar which was full of tourists around the dance hall and stage. I found a quiet seat at the bar and ordered the usual Cuban Libre and sat down to watch the reseedings. A voice at the back of me asked me my name and I turned to see a stunning lady who literally took my breath away as I stammered to try and remember my name. Obviously she then asked me to buy her a drink and one for her daughter as well. So I was stuck with these ladies and I had a go at doing the Salsa on the dance floor. They were obviously poor and asked me to buy them a meal, pork and beans again as they talked in pigeon English and at about two o'clock in the morning I made my excuses and left them promising to return another day.

The USA had embargoed Cuba so it was very strange to find the marina full of Americans who had arranged the Miami Yacht Club regatta there. There was one drunken sailor rocking his motor launch from side to side with the HiFi blasting out a song about "wanting a blonde, rich, nymphomaniac to drive him around in her Cadillac"!

I made friends with an American yachtsman not part of the regatta who sailed to Cuba and the Caribbean regularly and had picked up a couple of local girls and I joined him one night as we went down to the

end of the marina to a small disco bar and enjoyed watching the ladies dancing as we tasted the local Cuba libre cocktail. I said good night to them as he staggered back to his yacht a lady on each arm.

I got a taxi into Havana the next day and watched the driver joining two bits of wire to get the car radio working to blast out the Salsa in his old American car with a Russian engine under the bonnet. I was warned about getting mugged but found the people very hospitable and even joined in with the local colour of the girls all dressed up in traditional costumes.

I had an evening meal out in a "posh" restaurant but the only food available was pork and beans. The shops were mostly empty but on the hotel complex all the duty free drinks, cigars, clothes, gifts, were available. All very strange. But the strangest thing I found was on my next coach outing down to Trinidad to the East of the island. On the coach were Americans who worked in the USA Immigration department in Havana which completely confused me as what the hell they were doing in Cuba when Americans were banned. Hey ho! Anyway, they were a good bunch along with a Jewish bloke from Switzerland who had managed to find a local girl to join us on the trip. We got on like a house on fire for some reason and left the girl who got on well with the American ladies.

It was an interesting trip covering Castro's march and fight for independence and we ended up in Trinidad a World Heritage site, a very colourful town. Some of us went off to have a dinner at night in a local's house. It was absolutely wonderful, as the locals were encouraged to start up private enterprises such as these sort of restaurants. We sat outside the garage with the kids and dogs' running round with the family and the food was to die for. Enormous Cray fish like

lobsters. Then we staggered off to a night club up in the hills in a cave. We were sweating like pigs by the time we climbed the hill and eventually joined in with the locals in the usual Salsa dances with a the odd bit of rock and roll thrown in.

My Thompson Kuoni guide came up trumps and got me a personal guide of the cigar factory in Havana, the Partagas factory although they made all other brands: Cohiba: Romeo & Juliet; Bolivar; Punch; Monte Cristo et al. Cohiba were considered the best and the guide advised me not to buy them at the factory but to make contact with an employee and buy from them as they got paid in cigars. It was a fascinating tour listening to the book readers and laughed when the factory manager had to go outside for a cigarette.

So I eventually made contact with a local worker and went back to his home: a small room with all the family including a goat but with a curtain as privacy for the women. I paid 120 dollars for fifty Cohiba Esplendidos cigars which were considered the best as they were the ones Castro smoked and when I got home I priced them at £585 for a box of twenty five! And I smoked them! One thousand pounds gone up in smoke! I got a bit worried when I got searched on my arrival back in the UK at customs as I had 100 cigars packed into Jiffy envelopes but they weren't interested only looking for drugs apparently. It must have been the white jacket and panama hat that gave me the drug dealer's appearance!



## **Return to Cyprus and visit to Paris.**

The "PU" club from RAF Troodos had a reunion in Leighton Buzzard which I felt was not quite right as it should be in Cyprus so Fay and I booked a holiday in Cyprus hoping to meet up with some of the old Troodos boys. We stayed in a posh hotel in Paphos which was a swamp when I was there in the late 60's but now fully developed into a tourist resort. The old port hadn't changed with the fort on the end of the promenade. The hotel was on the edge of the town but within walking distance. We met a lovely old couple from Birmingham. He was a jeweller working in the old Jewellery quarter and she was a member of the Edgbaston Tennis club and knew a few of the professionals. We went out on a para gliding boat with them, I chickened out but he went up even at the age of eighty.

We found a lovely Greek taverna on the outskirts of the town run by a local family with a wife from Essex. We took a car and drove into Limmasol to try and find my old hunting friend Andreas and his garage. The town had changed considerably as we drove on what we knew as he Bypass which had open fields to the north. It was now fully developed and we lost our bearings and stopped to ask the way at a kiosk. The lady in the kiosk pointed across the road and there was Andreas's garage. It was in the afternoon, siesta time and the place was deserted but after we had knocked on the door a face appeared from the top floor window. "Paddy" it shouted.

After all these years Andreas immediately recognised me. We went inside and talked with his wife about the old times. He still had this fear of the Turks and showed us a door which still had a bullet in it. I had

taken Fay down there when she came out on holiday before we got married and Andreas was interested in the family. He had two sons and one of them had opened up a night club in Limmasol and he took us round there. It was being decorated but was very impressive. We talked to his son who told us about the problems he was having with the Russian Mafia trying to take over his club and that he had to keep a gun in his car as they followed him everywhere. His other son stayed working in the garage. We agreed to meet up in Paphos later and made our way back to the hotel.

We had booked in at the Forest Park Hotel for an overnight stay where we used to go to use the swimming pool. We had hoped to meet up with some of the old RAF boys in the Petit Palais hotel in Platres but only one turned up, Dennis who was married to a German lady, Trudi but they had split up since then. It was lovely to reminisce about the happy times and the drunken orgies had in the local bars and hotels and it was nice to stay in this four star hotel which we never could afford to eat and drink in the old RAF days.

It was Fay's sixtieth birthday in January 2006 and I arranged a surprise weekend away in Paris but told her we were going to Blackpool. Trevor was in on the act and we laughed about getting her a pink rinse going on a coach trip with all the old ladies. So we set off one very early morning and drove to Coventry airport explaining that the coach park was in Coventry. She eventually twigged when we got to the airport and looked up at the departures and saw one to Austria thinking we were going on a skiing trip. She also thought we might be going back to Spain for a weekend in our new home but at last we boarded for Paris. I had arranged to stay in a small boutique hotel in the centre of Paris which had been recommended to us as where British Consulate guests stayed. Now I had told

everybody to send their birthday cards to that address in Paris so when we arrived Fay was flabbergasted to be given a load of mail.

The weather was a bit dull for the most part but we had some sun and did all the touristy bits in the centre around the Arc de Triumph and the Eifel Tower. We had a Croque Monsieur sandwich and on the last night took a trip on a Bateau Mouche, a floating restaurant down the Seine which was very romantic.

I mentioned Chris and Sue Anscombe earlier who I met just leaving Cyprus. I kept in touch with them and Fay and I went to see them when they lived in Rye, Sussex. He had a little shop in Aldershot previously selling electrical components and he and Sue ran the Army officers club there. They had had a run off hard luck when their son accidentally shot himself with a shot gun while climbing over a fence and blew his head off. Chris had to carry him back to the house; I don't know how he coped that. Then they took over a small hotel cum pub called the Leicester Arms in Penhurst village in Sussex and we went down and stayed with them there for a weekend. They eventually moved up to Lanarkshire next to a main London Glasgow railway line. I had the golf club partnership up and running and Chris took some clubs up there. I had gone up to Scotland for a weekend and we both went along to the famous Ingliston Sunday market to test the water. His mother in law stayed with them and apparently had dementia and walked across the line as a train was passing. They then moved to Australia and we met up with them on our tour out there. Their daughter Debbie has a small business making clocks and lampshades out of melted down spirit bottles and we see her now and then on Facebook.



Chris and Sue outside their hotel in Penhurst



Chris and Sue at their bar

# The Avro Vulcan XH558

## PICK-A-PIECE CERTIFICATE



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT  
PADDY O'FARRELL  
'OWNS' PIECE # 135  
BOMB DOOR S. NORMAL OPERATION  
CONTINUA SYNCH  
OF AVRO VULCAN XH558

XH558 now belongs to the Nation, and you 'own' a component and have become a very real part of this awesome activity to restore XH558 to her rightful place in the sky.

Please note: 1. The piece you 'own' is yours in name only. 2. There is no exclusivity to ownership and multiple purchases may be made.



[www.vulcantotheskies.com](http://www.vulcantotheskies.com)

VULCAN TO THE SKY TRUST N° 476484 REGISTERED CHARITY N° 1101948

My interest in aircraft was intensified by a visit to the Bruntingthorpe aerodrome just up the road from

Lutterworth where one of the famous Falkland Vulcans was being rebuilt. I happened to meet one of the people involved and joined the "Vulcan to the air" group. I helped out in their marketing and every Sunday went up the Cold War Jet museum caravan and showed visitors around the various aircraft such as Buccaneers, Victor and Lightnings which did high speed runs up and down the runway which upset all the local residents. Bruntingthorpe was an old USAF station during the war and now privately owned used as logistics for vehicle storage. The restoration was nearly complete and the first flight took place shortly after we moved to Spain but at least I was allowed to sponsor the restoration by buying a small but significant piece of the aircraft. A scale model of it was beside the Vulcan which was used in the James Bond movie Thunderball.

## **South Africa**

21 September 1998 was the day we arrived in South Africa with Paula and Joe. Paula had talked so much about the country where her brother Michael was working that we decided to go and gave a look and booked flights to Cape Town. All we booked was a B & B in Camps Bay (a Daily Telegraph offer) on the outskirts of Cape Town for the first few nights just to get the lay of the land and prepare for our great adventure. The weather was a bit iffy and the landlord who had put up Ian Botham on one of the cricket test match tours advised us to go inland for better weather.

We hired a Toyota Camry, a nice large comfortable car for driving in such a large country. We had some daft ideas of "popping" up to Durban and across to Johannesburg but swiftly kicked that into touch once we realised how big the country was. We had been advised to get hold of a B & B booklet, a Platinum, Gold or Silver one with the listings of B & Bs, one Michael had given us and we picked up a mobile telephone at the airport and off we set. We had to cross the Little Karu desert and half way across in the middle of nowhere was a little one room building with the sign "Sex Shop". Not a soul in sight so we didn't bother stopping. We were heading for Montagu but got sucked into a brewery in Paarl, on the way there. The B & B in Montagu was luxurious to say the least but I picked up a tummy bug and we had to stay there for two nights but if Nelson Mandela can do so can we.

Our next stop planned was in Oudtshoorn where we found another lovely B & B and were made very welcome by the Swedish hosts. Everybody liked to have the latest news and we always had drinks with the landlords who put us in touch with the any travel news

and recommendations. There was an Ostrich farm there which was very interesting and after explaining that each male ostrich had to service half a dozen females on a regular basis some dopey American asked if they had any sexual transmitted diseases. I put Ostriches on my list of my next life after reincarnation.

We were told about a place in Swellendam and found a lovely place with a separate bungalow in a beautiful garden right opposite the rugby ground. We told to try a local restaurant but advised to only have the "ladies" portions steaks and found out why. They were enormous. We slept well and woke the next morning alone having to let ourselves out as we had prepaid. Can you imagine anybody trusting to that in the UK?

Off to our next destination, George and while walking round the streets where hailed with a loud "Paddy!" coming from an upstairs bar. It was our last landlords and we reassured them we hadn't taken the family silver. There wasn't anything of interest there so we went on down to the coast to Hermanus, famous for whale watching and hired the local whale watcher and his gnarled whale calling horn but even after some lovely stories never managed to see a whale but did spot them eventually out to sea on the road out.

We then travelled further East to Knysna and stayed with a couple in a beautiful house with gardens going down to the bay of the lagoon. The landlord was a professor and was the chairman of the local gardening club. We had a nice meal in the oyster bar in town on the bay front and even managed to get Fay on a cruise round the lagoon. The next day we had to make an early start as the garden club were due.

Plettenberg Bay was our next stop and we found a delightful modern pink bungalow on the sea front. The

host was a interior designer and the place was decorated beautifully. Another lovely meal on the sea front but a bit of a problem in the car park with some local youths. The first time we had encountered any problems but nothing happened as we made a quick getaway.

We made our way further East towards Port Elizabeth but soon realised once more just how big the country was and made a U turn in a Dutch urbanisation with lovely Dutch thatched roofed style modern houses all looking the same at Saint Francis Bay.

Back Westwards now and after a stop at George we went on a railway trip across a bay towards Cape Town past all the slums and from there we made a stop at Gordon's Bay and very nearly got taken apart by a gang of baboons in a lay bye car park and watched as a van got ripped apart by them.

Our next trip was to go to the wine lands and visit to Stellenbosch and a wine tasting in a lovely old Dutch farmhouse vineyard. After that we stopped off for lunch at Franshoek in a cave used to store the wine. The food was lovely looking down into the cave and all the barrels.

It was time to head back to Cape Town now and we found a B & B run by a German family in Hout Bay and had a rest there. Paula and Joe went off to watch the penguins and at night we went to a cabin type restaurant in the bay with some lovely seafood. We made a brief visit to Cape Town for some shopping in the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront. We stopped to watch and impromptu school choir which was lovely as they all had this natural rhythmic Zulu dance. A trip into the commercial centre where we were told to hide any cameras after the shops closed and when we returned

to the car park found a black family guarding it and asking for money. They had babes in arms and feeding them with cheap sherry.

A beautiful big country and we had received some excellent hospitality and seen some incredible scenery but only had time to see a tiny part of the country. Years later our son got married there which is another story.

## **My books and RAFA.**

I don't know what possessed me to start writing. I was reading Tolkien's volumes of the Hobbits and also watching a TV series called "Darling buds of May" written by H E Bates. They showed how simple people can enjoy life so much and become superior to their more intelligent and richer acquaintances.

I wanted to start with a sort of Garden of Eden approach and work from there. I just came up with some weird ideas of God sending some body down to do just that in a small village somewhere in the middle of England. Somewhere like Shangrila or Brigadoon, but it ended up as Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring. The Lord's uncle Gerantinium III was sent down to administer the project and Archangel Mary, aka Mrs Dimmock was sent as back up to keep an eye on things and set up a committee in a quiet little cottage in the middle of nowhere.

I just waited until I dreamt up some ideas and had to run to the PC to put them down before I forgot them which invariably was some strange time in the middle of the night. There was a Korean War hero who was a cook and got drunk and went berserk and started throwing pots and pans at the enemy and got a Military Cross for his effort so that fitted in with my hero Captain Creighky O'Riley. Then there was the village idiot and that's when the name Dimmock came to mind and Denis got changed to Dense.

The Brink's Mat robbery was news at the time so that got put in to the story. The Russian Mafia seemed like a good idea and a trip to Tenerife for the ladies of the village. I got a bit carried away as I was told later on by Liz Chapman, my mentor on a Creative Writing course run by the U3A that there's no apostrophe in

"tit's". I had too many characters and not a real plot, which was just what I wanted to do, a sort of farce but eventually I managed to get "Primrose Cottage" self published by an American firm who printed the "B" edition instead of the "A" edition with all the spelling and punctuations mistakes. But it was with huge pride and enjoyment when I saw the result of my efforts in print even though Fay thought it was a load of shite!

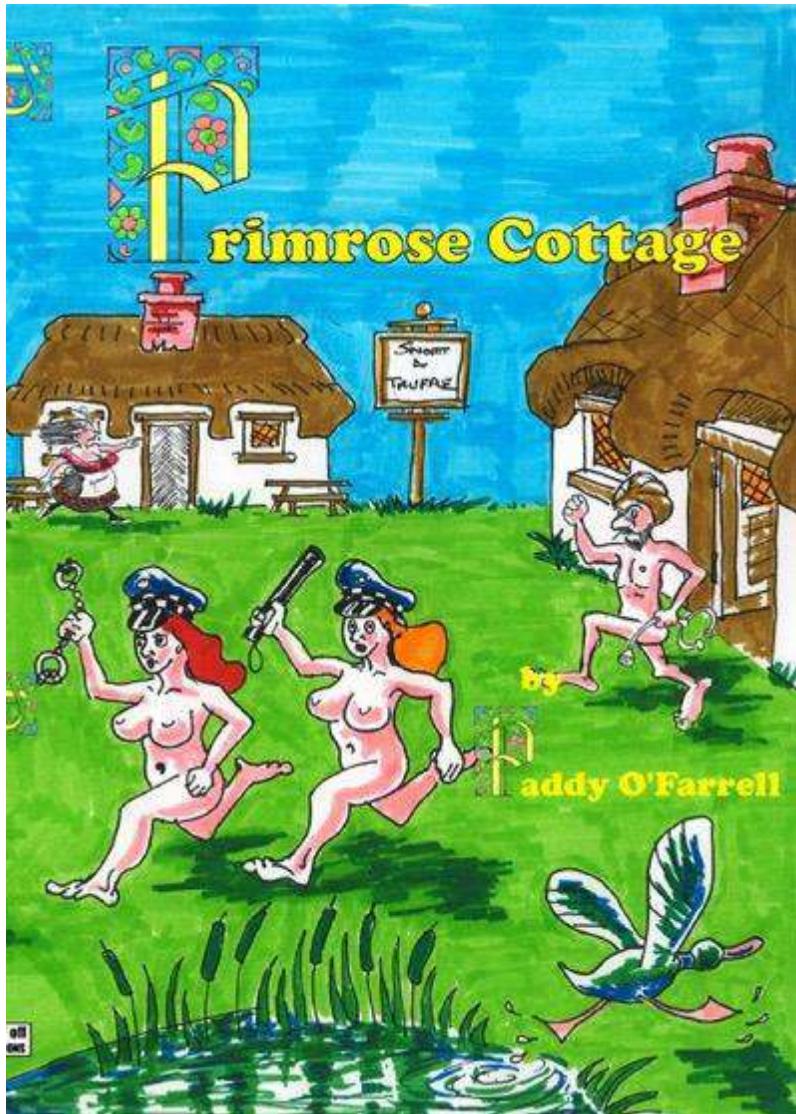
My next book followed Crikey O'Riley's move to Botswana after he had killed (shagged to death) the KGB agent, and introduced the Indian doctor who had to leave India in a hurry and started up a cricket team in Muddlecombe. The team ended up in Botswana under the illusion of the MCC and all sorts of problems arose as they got mixed up in the Angolan War and started a diplomatic incident. Of course Crikey got involved with a local beauty and diamond smuggling followed.

I had by now found a publishing company sponsored by the Arts Council who helped new writers with their books and I felt I had taken on Liz's instructions and kept the number of characters down as there were far too many in the Primrose Cottage saga so started on my third book with Dense Dimmock and Boris "Seven Bellies " Slobovitch trying to rescue an oil worker who had been kidnapped in Azerbaijan. This obviously started another diplomatic incident with drug smuggling thrown in for good measure.

Meanwhile the move to Spain was gathering pace and we had a few trips out there to prepare for the move taking as much with us as possible. Fay was working at BACP and could continue working there up to her retirement on a consultancy basis but had worked out a redundancy package to leave early. I was still in RAFA and warned them that I would have to leave at

short notice although they expected me to work the statutory 30 days.

Trevor and Lorraine had bought a small place in Canada Fields and could take a lot of our furniture, glass, linen and cutlery etc. We had started the selling process of Trevant with Anders, the golf Pro at Kilworth Golf Club which was taking a lot of time as they do. He was getting very frustrated over this and having already moved some of his stuff into our garage gave the Estate Agent an ultimatum to complete within 24 hours or he was pulling out. He didn't tell us about this but fortunately it forced a conclusion and at 5 o'clock in the evening on July the first 2006 we were told to move out the next day.

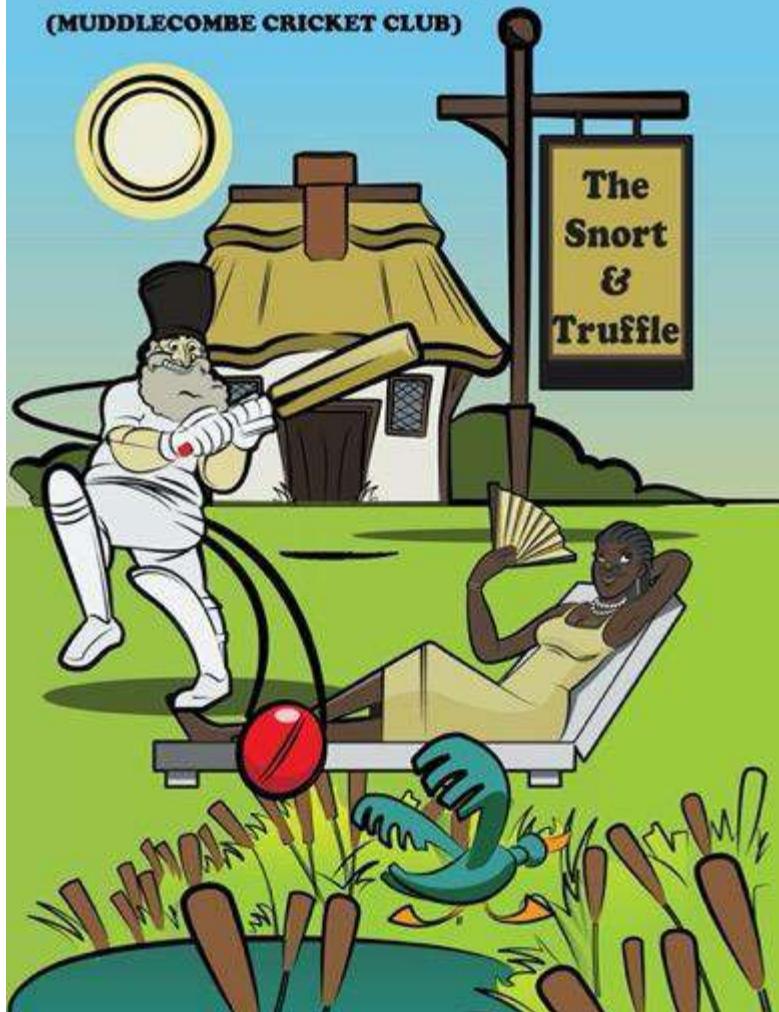


[My first book](#)

# M.C.C.

by Paddy  
O'Farrell

(MUDLECOMBE CRICKET CLUB)



[My second book.](#)

THE ADVENTURES OF

Dense Dimmock  
& Boris  
"Seven Bellies"  
Slobovitch



A BOOK BY PADDY O'FARRELL

[The third fiction book.](#)

# Common Sense Bridge

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for beginners



by Patrick G O'Farrell (BA)

[The fourth book](#), a technical training manual

# **Quantum Quarks**

I just thought I'd introduce something that makes me look intelligent. I've always had a fascination with quantum physics and decided to try and get to the bottom of all this nonsense. It has absolutely nothing to do with my memories but give me ten out of ten for trying to learn about this fascinating subject although it had probably done more harm to my brain cells than improve them.

Who'd have thought that a New Zealand physicist Ernest Rutherford would wake up one morning and decide to shoot a load of atoms through a gate and discover quantum physics.

Have you ever watched that professor Brian Cox on the tele. He gets right up my nose. He's so young, well he only looks 21. I think he's well over forty. He's always smiling, and he knows everything about everything. He pounces around the world popping into laboratories to chat to various quantum, astro, particle and nuclear physicists.

"Hows your neutrons today mate?"

"Oh, you know, they have their good days and bad days."

"Yeah, I gets the same problems with me quarks. And how's the old Hadron Collider these days?"

"Oh, much the same, just goes round and round. Do you remember old Higgsy?"

"Oh yeah, that nutter."

"Well, we only found his boson."

"I didn't know he'd lost it?"

Now you wouldn't expect that sort of talk from a keyboard player in a top chart band would you? Ok, so he is now an Advanced Fellow of particle physics in the

School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Manchester but what the hell are they all talking about? He made everything sound so simple on his TV series but then afterwards you sit down and think about it and the brain goes all gooey again.

So what is this quantum physics malarkey all about?

One of the things you have to understand about quantum physics is that it's nothing to do with the normal, Newtonian physics. So in that respect i feel fully authorised to discuss the matter as I managed to get 3% for my General Science GCE at school and am totally ignorant on physics. But I am now completed suckered into this fascinating subject, so much so that I really feel I need to get a basic understanding of it. I am too old to go back to school and start a physics course so I really feel I must break down the bullshit and try and explain this in basic terms so that I can ungooy my brain and help the forlorn hopers who need help to understand this incredible science.

Where do you start?

I'm going to jump through the first few years of the physics syllabus and go straight into trying to explain the basics of the atom.

mass → $\approx 2.3 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ charge → 2/3 spin → 1/2  <b>QUARKS</b>	mass → $\approx 1.275 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ charge → 2/3 spin → 1/2  <b>up</b> charm	mass → $\approx 173.07 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ charge → 2/3 spin → 1/2  <b>t</b> top	mass → 0 charge → 0 spin → 0  <b>g</b> gluon	mass → $\approx 126 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ charge → 0 spin → 0  <b>H</b> Higgs boson
mass → $\approx 4.8 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ charge → -1/3 spin → 1/2  <b>d</b> down	mass → $\approx 95 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ charge → -1/3 spin → 1/2  <b>s</b> strange	mass → $\approx 44.18 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ charge → -1/3 spin → 1/2  <b>b</b> bottom	mass → 0 charge → 0 spin → 1  <b><math>\gamma</math></b> photon	
mass → $0.511 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ charge → -1 spin → 1/2  <b>e</b> electron	mass → $105.7 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ charge → -1 spin → 1/2  <b><math>\mu</math></b> muon	mass → $1.777 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ charge → -1 spin → 1/2  <b><math>\tau</math></b> tau	mass → $91.2 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ charge → 0 spin → 1  <b>Z</b> Z boson	
mass → $<2.2 \text{ eV}/c^2$ charge → 0 spin → 1/2  <b>LEPTONS</b> <b><math>\nu_e</math></b> electron neutrino	mass → $<0.17 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ charge → 0 spin → 1/2  <b><math>\nu_\mu</math></b> muon neutrino	mass → $<15.5 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ charge → 0 spin → 1/2  <b><math>\nu_\tau</math></b> tau neutrino	mass → $80.4 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ charge → $\pm 1$ spin → 1  <b>W</b> W boson	
				<b>GAUGE BOSONS</b>

This is the Standard Model of elementary particles with the three generations of matter, gauge bosons in the fourth column, and the Higgs boson in the fifth.

Confused?

The Standard Model of particle physics is a theory concerning the electromagnetic, weak, and strong nuclear interactions, as well as classifying all the subatomic particles known.

Because of its success in explaining a wide variety of experimental results, the Standard Model is sometimes regarded as the "theory of almost everything".

Although the Standard Model is believed to be theoretically self-consistent and has demonstrated huge and continued successes in providing experimental predictions, it does leave some phenomena unexplained

and it falls short of being a complete theory of fundamental interactions.

It does not incorporate the full theory of gravitation as described by general relativity, or account for the accelerating expansion of the universe (as possibly described by dark energy). The model does not contain any viable dark matter particle that possesses all of the required properties deduced from observational cosmology. It also does not incorporate neutrino oscillations (and their non-zero masses).

The development of the Standard Model was driven by theoretical and experimental particle physicists alike. For theorists, the Standard Model is a paradigm of a quantum field theory, which exhibits a wide range of physics including spontaneous symmetry breaking, anomalies and non-perturbative behaviour.

It is used as a basis for building more exotic models that incorporate hypothetical particles, extra dimensions, and elaborate symmetries (such as supersymmetry) in an attempt to explain experimental results at variance with the Standard Model, such as the existence of dark matter and neutrino oscillations.

## Quark

A quark is an elementary particle and a fundamental constituent of matter. Quarks combine to form composite particles called hadrons, the most stable of which are protons and neutrons, the components of atomic nuclei.

Leptons have various intrinsic properties, including electric charge, spin, and mass. Unlike quarks however, leptons are not subject to the strong interaction, but they are subject to the other three

fundamental interactions: gravitation, electromagnetism (excluding neutrinos, which are electrically neutral), and the weak interaction.

In particle physics, a gauge boson is a force carrier, a bosonic particle that carries any of the fundamental interactions of nature, commonly called forces. Elementary particles, whose interactions are described by a gauge theory, interact with each other by the exchange of gauge bosons—usually as virtual particles.

The Higgs boson is an elementary particle in the Standard Model of particle physics. It is the quantum excitation of the Higgs field, a fundamental field of crucial importance to particle physics theory first suspected to exist in the 1960s. Unlike other known fields such as the electromagnetic field, it has a non-zero constant value in vacuum

Now we are going to discuss some more particles, this is where it really goes bananas, the five particles that don't exist.

Phonons, magnons, excitons, majoranas and weyl fermions.

Phonons, electric cowboys.

They realised that phonons existed after the discovery of Higg's Boson by smashing protons at the Large Hadron Collider in CERN. At normal temperature, phonons are collective oscillations of atoms that shuttle heat around solids. But at very low temperatures these quasiparticles act as cowboys that corral electrons into herds that move as one with almost zero resistance.

This is how low temperature superconductivity arises and the huge electromagnetic fields superconducting magnets create are what curve protons around the LHC's circular racetrack. Such magnets are also used in MRI scanners, when they force oxygen atoms in tissues into a dance that emits traceable radio signals. Phonons are also key to the workings of fledgling thermoelectric materials. These convert heat into electricity, with the long-held dream of slowing a car's waste engine heat to power its electrics.

#### MAGNONS

### Sultans of spin

Imagine a computer that, when you flipped the on switch, came on at exactly the point you'd left it. That's the promise of magnons, quasiparticles that emerge from waves of flipping spin, a quantum-mechanical property of atoms that is the origin of magnetism.

In standard PCs and smartphones, working memory is stored as units of charge, which dissipates when the device is switched off. With magnons, stored information would not dissipate until the magnetic field was changed, regardless of power supply.

Spintronics, as this idea is called, would have other advantages. It uses less power, so chips can be pushed closer together without overheating – a problem that is plaguing further miniaturisation of transistor chips. Magnons can also be prompted to organise by electromagnetic waves, so computers could become entirely wireless.

#### EXCITONS

### Plants' secret weapon

Earth receives more energy from the sun in an hour than the entire human population uses in a year. Plants have perfected the art of capturing that juice – thanks to excitons.

Inside a plant's leaves are light-harvesting proteins. Their electrons absorb photons, and the energy kicks them out of position, creating a "hole". The electron and hole then link up to form an exciton, which can be transported around the plant's photosynthetic machinery. When they get to where they're needed, the electron and hole recombine, releasing energy that is used to split water into hydrogen and oxygen, a key stage in making sugars from sunlight.

This reaction ultimately supports all life on Earth, and we'd love to mimic it in solar cells. In 2013, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found a way to directly image excitons, a significant step to making that happen.

## MAJORANAS

### Quantum heroes

If you ever want a true multi-tasker, go for a quantum computer. These as-yet imperfectly realised machines use delicate, indeterminate quantum states to weigh up lots of solutions to a problem all at once, as long as no disturbance from the environment breaks the quantum spell.

Majorana quasiparticles could make quantum computing more robust, supplying "qubits" for quantum number-crunching. A sort of massless electron, Majoranas come in pairs, with each particle acting as a half of the whole. That means you have two copies of all the information they contain, so in theory Majorana qubits should be far less vulnerable to external noise. But these qubits exist in the midst of a huge background of other electronic effects, and isolating the Majorana information is tricky, says Attila Geresdi, who studies these systems at QuTech in Delft, the Netherlands.

## WEYL FERMIONS

### Ambidextrous electrons

Weyl fermions are like a shy cousin of the electron. Predicted mathematically almost 80 years ago, they have two key properties: they have no mass, which means they can move very fast, and they come in mirror images of each other, like right and left hands.

This handedness, or chirality, means Weyls are resistant to interference from sources that don't match their handedness. This in turn means they are difficult to scatter, and streams of the two types of Weyl fermion can potentially flow close to each other without interfering. Some think these properties could make them the basis for highly sophisticated computer processing well beyond spintronics (see "Sultans of spin", left). But since materials that host Weyl fermions were only created recently, it is early days in the field of "Weyltronics".

Now you have to blame old Einstein for the start of all this nonsense with the introduction of them photons as particles of light which could interfere with themselves to diffract around corners amongst other things.

This started the "wave particle" theory which gives photons duality and the ability to not only knock about in free space but also the jostling about of particles in solid materials.

Ok, so what has all that got to do with me? Nothing I just thought I'd throw that in to enliven the book and show that I do try sometimes to increase the range of my knowledge, albeit failing miserably.

I think we can safely presume there aren't any Astro Physicists reading this so we can safely say that everybody is totally confused and let's get back to something more mundane.

## **Book three: Spain**

Good bye England  
My 65<sup>th</sup> birthday pool party.  
2010: New Zealand and Australia  
The Marion Hogben saga  
Our second Christmas in Spain  
Holiday in Tenerife 2018  
Hospitals and the Ordoñez family  
Some more Bridge friends and Morocco  
Pensions  
The Susan and David saga  
Cadiz, Jerez and Barcelona  
Our international friends and bureaucracy.  
Xmas 2021  
Pat & Rita visit march 2022  
Bureacracy 2022  
Holidays.2022/2023  
The parking fine  
Opera, Danish and Norwegian bridge clubs.  
Easter 2023. Twerking  
King Charles' Coronation, 6th May 2023  
Cars  
By road and rail to Rhonda  
Friends and Halloween 2023  
Bridge clubs  
Epilogue

## **Good bye England.**

I e-mailed RAFA to explain the situation apologising for the short notice and within an hour, Tony Hiron, the PR Manager at RAFA arrived with a bunch of flowers wishing us well. We filled the car up with all our remaining clothes and hastily booked a ferry for the next day and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July we said good bye to Trevant and Antony who was still there. "What bit about Mummy and Daddy moving to Spain don't you understand?" we laughingly cried as we drove out. He was just staying to help us out to clear the odd bits and bobs as we bade our sad but at the same time joyful farewells. We popped into Halfords to buy a small battery car fan in lieu of the lack of air conditioning in the car and drove down to Portsmouth for the ferry to Bilbao. It was a lovely summer's day as we boarded having sorted out the finances after the house sale and transferring the last amount of money we had been paid at the ferry terminal bank.

Fay is not the world's greatest sailor and put on a brave face as we boarded and found our minimalistic cabin. We had an evening meal and then went to the cinema to watch "The Da Vinci Code". You could still hear the monotonous engine vibrations in the cinema which did nothing help Fay enjoy the evening or the night either. She survived crossing the Bay of Biscay which was fortunately like a mill pond until the breakfast the next day as we watched from the bow windows of the restaurant entering Bilboa harbour. It was eight o'clock in the morning as we started our journey into retirement in sunny Spain.

We had booked a motel just outside Madrid and arrived their after a 4 hour drive. There was no place to eat for lunch in the hotel until the evening and so we found a garage that was open and bought some

sandwiches and a bottle of pop and sat in our motel room and had a siesta. After a shower we looked at each other and wondered what to do as we were in an industrial area and there was nowhere to go so we decided to just carry on driving down to Malaga and our new home. We booked out under a queer look from the receptionist and carried on in sweltering heat across the *frying pan* of Europe. Fay kept the hand fan pointing in the direction of various parts of my body as we had no air conditioning and in four hours made our way to our new home.

So this was the start of our new life in the sun. The furniture was already in place thanks to Fay and Maureen so we unpacked our stuff from the car and celebrated with a drink. A shower and a walk down the road for something to eat and after an exciting but exhausting day collapsed in our bed and slept soundly until we were awoken by the sun shining into our bedroom. A novel experience but one we would get used to quite easily.

That was the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2006.

During the previous period when Maureen and Fay had set up the villa, they had met up with "Uncle Jim". He was related to one of Maureen's friends, Audrey and he had just moved to Guaro from Dundee. Fay and Maureen had made contract with him and we met up with him and his wife Sandra. They were extremely helpful to us explaining the local points of interest. We had ordered a car the last time we were over and it was ready for collection now that we had arrived permanently in Spain. Jim and Sandra Petrie who followed us to the garage in Alhaurin el Grande and took our Honda back home for us. It was now quite old and with very high mileage and of course with a right hand drive so we gave it to Jim saving us all the hassle

of the paper work of selling it. He felt it only right and proper that he should give us something for the car so I said that a box of Havana cigars would be quite enough and he was only too happy to agree.

The Honda had served us well and was very reliable. We bought our first, a Honda Accord back in the early nineties. It was then the most reliable car in the Paddy Power Car rating of 3 year old cars. Then we upgraded it to the current Accord buying it from the Honda Dealer in Narborough. We had looked at a Honda SUV in Spain but the rear door swung open to the side and wouldn't fit into our garage so chose the Nissan X Trail with a door that swung up saving space in the garage. It was a 4 by 4 with lots of room with drop down back seats to fit all the Ikea flat pack furniture we would be buying. By this time Jim and Sandra had moved into the campo in a house belonging to Jim Buchanan, of the whisky dynasty in a small finca in the middle of nowhere but with stunning views over the Guadelhorce valley but it needed a 4 by 4 to get to it.

They introduced us to all their neighbours in the mountain overlooking Guaro who lived in beautiful houses with stunning views up and down the Guadelhorce valley. We would drive up there for dinner parties or barbeques, some time staying the night with Jim and Sandra. Their close neighbour, about a kilometre away was Margaret. She was quite a character, well known for not wearing knickers. She was over eighty and had a "toy boy" Brian, a Nuclear Physicist who had a Porsche 911 which was totally unsuitable for the mountain tracks. The next people we met were a retired Army Captain and his wife who were Harlequin rugby supporters.

Further up the mountain were Phil and Barbara. She had a son from her first marriage, Nick who was

gay and incredibly handsome, what a waste, but I got on well with him and he did a lot of work in our garden for us. His partner was in the hospitality business in Gran Canaria. Phil did video presentations and poor Barbara was left at home stuck up the top of the mountain with poor eyesight who couldn't drive and was bored out of her mind. They eventually went back to Burton on Trent. Ron and Daphne lived opposite them. He was a builder and built his house there with a beautiful view of the valley. We would have a lot of fun with them and sometimes stay in their lovely house. His 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party was brilliant with Nick dressed as a waiter, half naked poncing about causing a lot of laughter. Ron and Daphne sold up and moved to France where he started another building project but died from emphysema.

Then further up the track were a lovely German couple who were great fun and then further on were Bill and Viv. They were both qualified with Masters sailing certificates and used to work for a yacht charter company as crew for tourists sailing round the Caribbean. They had some lovely tales of their voyages around the world, especially delivering a big luxury catamaran from Miami to Hawaii. The yacht had motorised sail moving equipment that was operated by the press of a button and an inbuilt TV hidden in the burr walnut cabinet. Bill was eighty and twenty years older than Viv, a lovely couple but she developed Parkinsons and died not long after we met them. We never heard any more from Bill who returned to the Caribbean.

However our first priority when we arrived in Villa Andaluz was to build a swimming pool. Our next door neighbours Benny and Janne, a Danish couple recommended Juan Tirado who had built their apartment at the back of their property so we contacted

him and the big build started. I gave him a design for the layout of the garden with hidden lighting and covered areas and a ten by four metre pool with plenty of room for sun beds and a kitchen and barbeque. The original garden was full of trees with lots of little paths and handmade statues ready to fall over, typical Spanish layout in the shade.

**Paddy & Fay have moved to**

**Villa Andaluz**  
Calle San Boi 4  
Bajo Urb. El Rodeo  
29100 Coin  
Malaga  
Tel: (0034) 952 453 562  
e-mail: [paddy@trevant.f9.co.uk](mailto:paddy@trevant.f9.co.uk)



**We would welcome visits from :**

Please tick the following boxes where applicable

- |                          |                          |               |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Bricklayers              | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tilers        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Landscape gardeners      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Plumbers      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Electricians             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Carpenters    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Swimming pool installers | <input type="checkbox"/> | TV engineers  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bankers                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Psychiatrists | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Visa applications will also be considered from the following categories:**

(Please tick where applicable)

- |                  |                          |      |                          |                     |      |                          |                     |
|------------------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Friends          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rich | <input type="checkbox"/> | (please see note 1) | poor | <input type="checkbox"/> | (please see note 2) |
| Relatives        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rich | <input type="checkbox"/> | (please see note 1) | poor | <input type="checkbox"/> | (please see note 2) |
| Other categories |                          |      |                          |                     |      |                          |                     |

We would love to pop in briefly and with a large cash donation for the St Patrick's mission for fallen women of Puerto Banus (see to tour options)

We don't know how we are going to survive without the company of the two most sophisticated, intelligent and loving couple (please see note 1 or 2)

We like Fay but are not so sure about what's-'is-name (please see note 1 or 2)

**Note 1** Please forward a blank cheque as a refundable\* booking deposit

**Note 2** Please find a rich friend to forward a blank cheque as a refundable\* booking deposit

Please complete the attached Accommodation Booking Form together with (please see note 1)

\*Please see details of deposit refunds on Accommodation Booking Form



This was the old "pool" a ten foot deep water tank, which had to be dug out when the whole top patio was rebuilt.



The new pool

## **My 65<sup>th</sup> birthday pool party.**

So on July the 31<sup>st</sup> 2007 we had our first pool party on my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday and invited all our new friends and some secret ones as well. We found a bridge club when we first arrived in a retirement/sports complex Sol Andalus near Alhaurin de la Torre. It had apartments for rent or buy with a health spa, indoor swimming pool and facilities for medical assistance together with a gymnasium. The apartments were quite luxurious as we had been given a tour of them. There was a decent sized theatre and the bridge club was affiliated to TAPAS, Theatre And Performing Arts Society. We had to pay an annual fee and had the use of a room all to ourselves for the bridge nights. I got involved with the theatrical side in painting the scenery for them as well. I kept my past thespian talents well hidden as I could hardly remember my own name let alone the lines from a script.

So we asked our new friends up to my birthday party.

Little did I know that Fay had sneaked the family over for the party as well. It was a well kept secret with Fay answering mobile phone calls in the wardrobe less I heard them. I got called up to the pool in the evening before to talk to the building contractor. I thought this was strange as I knew he had gone on holiday to Africa and when I got up to the pool there were the boys and wives and girlfriends with big grins on their faces. They had booked in to the Paloma Blanca hotel the other side of Coin, a place we had used before for visits to Coin. It was the meeting place for the Royal British Legion. Jim and Sandra got us involved with them.

So Fay was pulling her hair out as I invited all more bridge friends and in the end we had sixty and we'd only been here one year. There is a saying that if you invite one hundred people to a party in the UK, seventy five will turn up, but if you invite one hundred to a party in Spain one hundred and twenty five will turn up. This was the case as our Danish neighbours had friends staying with them. We had Mick and Margaret as well and a lovely old Scottish lady who lived down the road who was eighty years old and incredibly sprightly. I hired a strange old lady who played at the British Legion sometimes. She had a guitar but a fairly limited number of songs and I had to pick her up and take her home where she lived with her cats and the place stank and was covered in hairs. But she managed to keep the party going while most people ended up in the pool while Mick and I with the help of the boys got stuck into our barbecue duties. It was of course a lovely day and everybody enjoyed themselves even the eighty year old lady who threw herself into the pool much to everybody's surprise. We later went to stay with her in Singapore.

We were very lucky with our neighbours. We were the only Brits in the road; you could have counted the total number of Brits in the whole urbanisation on one hand. On one side we had Manuel and Puri, short for Purification, what a lovely name. They were teachers, he taught physics and she taught French. They were members of the Coin Chorale Society, Puri was the president of the society which was quite famous in Andalusia and had some famous guest opera singers in their concerts. We went to one in the old convent in Coin. It was freezing cold and we slipped away at the end during one of the long speeches the Spanish like to do.

On the other side we had our mad Danish neighbours: Benny and Janne with their children Laura and Sebastian with the dogs Karl and Piri and several cats. We met them briefly upon arrival and then in the town's famous New Year's Eve party, they were dressed as a pack of playing cards. It took us by surprise as we obviously didn't recognise them immediately.

Opposite us were Anna and Miguel with another Miguel the baker down one end of the road and the lovely Ordoñez family down the other end. Antonio the electrician who helped with the installation of the electrics in our pool project was the other side of Janne. I used to walk Janne's dogs up the "hill" which must have had a gradient of one in one, well it seemed like it and there's no way I could even attempt it now as I write these memoirs at the age of eighty.

So by the end of the summer of 2006 the top patio project was complete and we turned our attention to the front. We had changed the old garage doors to roll up and over electric doors and widened the exit from the garage as I kept scraping the side of the car when leaving the garage and our super duper new car was beginning to look like all the other Spanish cars. All the parking lots on the commercial shopping centres had very narrow parking places and you would return to your car with the shopping to find someone had scraped the side of your car. Rumour had it that Spanish made cars came off the production line with scratches already on them!

We were now fully up and running and prepared or visitors:

# Holiday Accommodation Booking Form



Name:	Villa Andaluz
Address:	Calle San Boi 4
Post Code:	Bajo Urb. El Rodeo
Mobile:	29100 Coin
Dates: from :	to:
Malaga airport collect:	Malaga, Spain
Flight no:	Arrival time:
Salutation upon arrival	(Text for chauffeur's welcome board)
Lord..... & Lady..... <input type="checkbox"/>	H.E. Monseignor..... & Miss..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Mr & Mrs Smith <input type="checkbox"/>	SAGA Holidays <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sleeping arrangements:</b>	
double <input type="checkbox"/> twin <input type="checkbox"/> single <input type="checkbox"/> share log store with Paddy <input type="checkbox"/> Sex: yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Special Requirements:</b>	
Wheel chair <input type="checkbox"/> Incontinence pads <input type="checkbox"/> Viagra <input type="checkbox"/> Batteries: Hearing aid <input type="checkbox"/> other, please specify.....	
<b>Other medicinal requirements:</b>	
Gin <input type="checkbox"/> Vodka <input type="checkbox"/> Whiskey <input type="checkbox"/> Wine: red <input type="checkbox"/> white <input type="checkbox"/> Sanatogen <input type="checkbox"/> Steradent <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Special in-house services:</b>	
Paddy's Aloe-vera chestal exfoliating rub <input type="checkbox"/>	Free to ladies, 36 DD plus
Fay's Aloe-vera inside leg exfoliating rub <input type="checkbox"/>	Free to male Flamenco dancers
<b>Alarm calls:</b>	
9 am <input type="checkbox"/> 10 am <input type="checkbox"/> 11 am <input type="checkbox"/>	Please feel for pulse <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sight seeing tours:</b>	
Opera House, Seville <input type="checkbox"/>	Alhambra Palace, Granada <input type="checkbox"/>
Shoe shopping, Marbella <input type="checkbox"/>	Lost Gardens of Heligan <input type="checkbox"/>
Professional ladies of Puerto Banus <input type="checkbox"/> This may incur an overnight stay	Help Paddy in the garden <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Special dietary requirements</b>	
Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Atkins <input type="checkbox"/> Liquid <input type="checkbox"/>	Mars bar in batter <input type="checkbox"/>

Your convivial hosts Paddy & Fay eagerly await your visit if only to break up  
the daily monotony of sex, drugs and rock and roll.

An obscenely large deposit will secure this booking. \* Fully refundable upon the successful completion  
of a 50 page questionnaire on Thermonuclear Dynamics.

## **2010: New Zealand and Australia**

Now you may find this hard to believe but Fay liked a drink now and then and it all started in Scotland. One of her favourite drinking holes was the Ollerton Hotel in Kirkcaldy. Her and her call girl friends (telephonists) would go there and it was run by a Lancashire lass called Jean. I got to meet her eventually when she lived in Falkland. Her husband died and she took a very brave decision to move to Australia on her own and travelled round in a motor caravan and eventually ended up meeting an Australian gentleman, Mark and they settled down in a small town just outside Maclean in New South Wales just south of Brisbane on the East coast. Jean and Mark returned to Scotland on holiday and we met them back in Falkland and got on well with Mark and decided to go out to Oz and meet up with them out there.

Jean had a saying when ordering the last drink "one for the road" but in her Lancashire accent it went "one for't road" which Mark translated as "one fat road" which became a standard call at the end of the evening ever since.

While we were going to Oz we decided we might just as well pop into New Zealand while we were about it. So off we went on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2010 leaving Heathrow in British Airways and met a purser, Maragaret from Crawley who had a friend called Moira who lives in Coin in El Rodeo and actually met her husband in the butchers in El Rodeo. Margaret had flown in the flight taking Charles and Diana. We had hopefully booked our luggage in Malaga through to Bangkok and it actually arrived with us along with a group of Highland Dancers on then fight on their way to dance at the Australian Tatoo.

Mike and Jan Constable were old friends of ours and I helped Jan publishing her book about her time in Dubai. They recommended going to the Mandarin Hotel in Bangkok and so we duly arrived, booked in to the Holiday Inn and after looking at a local map asked the way there. "Oh, you can't walk there" our receptionist advised us but it was only half a kilometre away and we ignored her advice but soon realised our folly. The traffic was ridiculous and the only way to cross a road was to take a leap of faith into the heaving mass of Took Tooks and motorcycles. We eventually made it to the Mandarin and sat down on the riverside in this magnificent restaurant and were given first class treatment and Michelin Star food under the moon. We had to take out a mortgage to pay for it but it was well worth it. £145 for the two of us and no wine!

We spent a couple of days there and toured the city on the Sky Train air conditioned metro and visited the famous Jim Thompson clothes shop. He was Australian and had set up a group of shops in the South East Asian region with beautiful cloth from the local area and as it was Fay's birthday I bought a couple of shirts. The next thing we wanted to do was take a ferry up the river past all the beautiful temples so we bought two tickets from the local rep and went down to the ferry dock, walked onto the ferry and were duly taken across it down into a dug out with a V8 Chrysler out board motor and sped off up river with poor Fay hanging on for dear life. We stopped at some temples and did a trip around the back water canals and had to stop for a beer for the driver and one for his mate at the river side and made it back safely. A journey Fay will never forget.

We had another meal in a place recommend by the hotel which meant getting a taxi back late at night which was a bit scary as the taxi driver wasn't quite

sure were to drop us off and we reckoned he has on drugs but we made it eventually. I then bumped into a coffee table in our hotel and one of the lovely waitresses cleaned and dressed my wound with her gentle strokes.

Our next stop was New Zealand with a stop off in Sydney to change airlines only after a quarantine gang followed by ambulance, fire brigade and customs people looked after a young girl in our row who was taken ill during the flight. Three hours in the airport and then we flew over the New Zealand Alps landing at Christchurch. Christchurch was getting ready for the Rugby World Cup but what they weren't ready for was the terrible earthquake in September. We booked into our hotel and had a few hours sightseeing with a nice steak and some wine in a local restaurant and staggered back completely knackered.

The next morning we attended the group welcoming party and met up with our travelling partners and set off in the coach. Our tour leader was a very erudite gentleman with a vast knowledge of the countryside and it seemed as if he knew the inside leg measurement of every sheep in the country.

We got very friendly with an old Greek couple Dimitri & Agnolou Stoicis who lived in Melbourne and whom we would visit later when we journeyed to Oz. Jimmy and Agnes we called them and I regaled them with my stories of Cyprus. Jimmy had a very hard life evacuated from Greece during the war and taken to a slave camp in another country until the end of the war and the only way his mother recognised him when looking for him was by a burn mark on his toe.

Our first stop on the coach trip around the South Island was at Geraldine where we had a nice lunch in a

lovely deli then on to Canterbury Plains past Lake Tekapo and some incredibly interacting sheep farms! Our next stop was Lake Pukaki where Lord of the Rings was filmed and where we could have a nice view of Mount Cook. Our overnight stop was at Omarana when we met Emma and Maro : Aussie / Italian a very interesting couple.

The next day after an early morning start we stopped at Moeraki Boulder and had a coffee break on a beach with prehistoric rocks. Then on to Dunedin with it's beautiful railway station that was now the Otago Arts Society building. We had a day off and walked around the town visiting the Chinese gardens which were very tranquil and had lunch in the Octagon square next to a statue of Robbie Burns. There was a big Scottish influence here with streets named : Princes; George; Hanover etc.

Set off the next day and stopped at Balclutha for lunch and on to Te Anau and a nice hotel on the side of Lake Ta Anau. Had a walk into town after dinner in the hotel and sat overlooking the lake. The next day we drove to Milford Sound and had a boat trip around the fjord with stunning views especially of the waterfalls: Stirling Falls was spectacular then on for a brief walk in the rain forest. The coach broke down so we had to hang around until a replacement arrived and then up to Queenstown.

The boys had both been to Queenstown before so we were well prepared for the stunning scenery around Lake Wakatipu and the surrounding mountains. The boys were there in the snow doing their thing but we took a 4 X 4 safari trip in a Jeep and went gold panning in the river. This was some of the location for the "Lord of the Rings" film and then on to an old what looked like a Western cowboy set in Arrowtown with horse ties on

the side of the road. This was where the first bungee jump took place and we had a look down on the bridge but the queue was too long so we gave it a miss!

Back to the town and up in a Gondola for dinner and a Maori show with views overlooking the lake again. The meal was excellent, we gorged on lamb but the show a bit average. A bit touristic. Our eldest son Trevor stayed here in Queenstown and he is as deep as the oceans and not the most garrulous of people so we were surprised when he phoned us from here and we asked what the local time was. "It's seven o'clock here and I am watching the most beautiful glorious colourful sunrise. It is something else with the views of the lake and mountains, you must see it it's breathtaking!"

We both looked at ourselves at home and couldn't believe this was our son. So now that we were here now we rang him back in the UK and said, "We're in Queenstown and we see what you mean!"

The next day we headed North through the rain forest to the Fox Glacier and had a walk along the riverside to the end of the glacier. After dinner we watched the Kia birds wrecking the cars in the car park and I bought a winter coat in the local shop.

Off to Hokita the Jade factory the next day then on to Pamcvake Rocks and blow holes and a walk to the Paparoa National Park and saw some dolphins in the sea and from there to Arthurs Pass and the Trans Alpine train and back to Christchurch. As we left the airport we bought some thing to eat but ran out of NZ dollars needed to pay the departure tax but a lovely girl on the pay out said we could have our Anzac biscuit free. That epitomises the New Zealanders, very friendly albeit living in the 1950's.

So we now headed off to Australia to stay with Jean and Mark but had a two hour wait in Sydney before setting off North to Balina. At last we set off in a prop plane but half way there had to turn back due to some technical problem. The inside of the aircraft was a bit low and I kept banging my head but at last we set off again and some girl was worried about me getting concussed before we got there. We arrived at a deserted Balina Bay airport and poor Jean and Mark pulling their hair out.

We awoke the next day to the sound of all the birds demanding their breakfast, all sorts and colours of parrots together with whistling ducks and doves that Jean fed every day. They were in her bird bath or bird table or if late the big black butcher birds would be tapping on the kitchen window demanding their chopped frankfurter breakfast. And in the next field a family of kangaroos grazing in the grass.

The next day we down to Brooms Head beach to swim in the ocean and found a turtle which Mark carried back to the sea. There were pelicans on the beach and Emus on the road down there. Then we went into the nearest town Maclean with a heavily Scottish feel about it and then on to Marks bowling club and got some tickets for a show on next Saturday. The bowling club was like nothing on earth compared to the rural clubs in England. It was basically financed by the one armed bandits which allowed and enormous bar and lounge area with a sponsored Chinese restaurant and a full entertainments hall not to mention the huge bowling greens. We later found out that we had booked the show a month too early.

Mark knew a travel agent so we booked a trip to the Blue Mountains on our way to Sydney and then Jean took us to Yamaba shopping and fish and chips. Up at 7

am the next day for a swim in the local large community swimming pool, they do like to get up early in Australia!

A River Jazz Cruise was next on the diary with Jeans friends Sally and Andrew which was an excuse for a booze up and the next day we met up with my old 90<sup>th</sup> RAF pal Chris Anscombe and his wife Sue. We had kept in touch with them and he help sell our golf clubs while he lived in Scotland and we did the Edinburgh market together. His son accidentally shot himself and Chris had to carry him home headless. Their daughter Debbie had a small business selling clocks made out of old bottles and we still have one of hers to this day up in the top patio. The last time we met when we were both in RAF was in Limmasol in Cyprus and he played in a band in the bypass bar. So we had a lot to talk about and poor Jean and Mark left early so we had to get a taxi back to their place.

So we had to say goodbye to Jean and Mark and set off from Grafton International Airport. This must have been the smallest airport in the world run by two blokes and a cat. Not an aircraft in sight until a small single engine Cessna popped in to use the toilet and then our turbo propped Rex Express Saab plane arrived and on we went to Sydney with a brief stop en route to pick up half a dozen more passengers.

Fay was really getting her sea boots on as we did a boat trip round Sydney harbour the next day which was calm until you got out past Shark Island and the Heads and we saw a large replica sailing ship of the Endeavour that Darwin sailed 150 years ago. Dinner in Darling Harbour and then the next day up to the Blue Mountains for spectacular views and a stop for a

beautiful lunch in a deli but I had a dicky tummy so we missed out on the steepest railway trip.

We picked up a hire car at the airport the next day and headed off along the coast road to Melbourne via Wollongong past Batemans Bay to Merimbula for the night after a food free day and then tucked into a soft shell fish salad with Asian Salad and Scallops wrapped in Parma Ham but the restaurant closed at 8.30 pm. Breakfast by the lake then onto Lakes Entrance and a motel for a swim and a walk into town but again everything closed at 8.30.

The next day we eventually made it to Melbourne and stayed at the Victoria Hotel and made contact with Jimmy and Agnes our Greek friends we met in New Zealand who picked us up and took us out to a fantastic Greek restaurant in the district of Fitzroy. And then a guided tour from Jimmy and back to the hotel and the next day we had breakfast in Federation Square. Another quick tour of the city by tour bus and back by train and then to the MCC Cricket ground and on to the Melbourne Park tennis ground where Fay enjoyed the atmosphere sitting in the Margaret Court Arena and lunch in the players cafe.

Jimmy picked us up at night and we went back to his home in Footsgrey to meet his family, Tari and Dena daughters and local Greek friends for a BBQ and feast with a 90 year old neighbour dancing with a glass of Ouzo on his head. They gave us some present of a Melbourne clock, two shot glasses and two neck pillows that we'd used on the coach in NZ.

Back on to the Great Ocean Road the next day and eventually found the right road and stopped for breakfast in Torquay for Eggs Benedictine. The next stop was a famous surfing Bells Beach and on to Lorne

and Erskine Falls and Teddy's Look Out and on to Kennet River and stopped to see some Koala Bears in their natural habitat high up in the trees. From there to Appollo Bay and a nice room, dinner in the nearest restaurant and home for 8.30.

Up early again and out by 8, and on to the Twelve Apostles for a great view of these world wide famous beach rock columns and breakfast at last in Port Campbell and then on to Port Fairey a lovely little town with a house that had a plaque on the side of it saying "Nothing Happened Here", so we went on to Portland and through to Nelson and on to Mount Gambier and the Blue Lake which had a deep colouring due to some metal deposits. We negotiated a 30 dollar deal in an executive suite with personal spa and a swim and sauna and missed a photo of a Koala walking across the road.

Another early start, I was nearly getting used to all this early rise making me healthy, wealthy and wise and on to Robe and a lovely breakfast in a quaint cafe under a Wild Mulberry Tree, that was the name of the cafe and really friendly staff and on past the salt lakes and wineries and on the Wellington Peninsula ferry which took 2 minutes with 8 cars on to Victor Harbour. We had a short walk across the pier to Granite Island to see the penguins at night in their little caves in the sand and returned to our hotel at 9.30 to found us locked out with a note to say the key was under the chair on the patio. Had a drink and a smoke and next door complained about the smoke.

Our next stop was Adelaide and we arrived in the middle of the Arts Festival and meeting up with our old 90<sup>th</sup> RAF chum Roger (Chunky ) Pine in Glenelg with music on the beach. We had a few drinks in an Irish bar and chewed over old times and left him and his wife and took the tram back to the city and joined in all the

festivities. They had illuminated all the big civic buildings with spectacular graphics and we met up with some Russian brides looking for husbands all dressed in traditional outfits and got on the local radio station. It was a lovely night and the next day we dropped the car off at the airport and flew on the Perth. You don't realise how big Australia is as it took four hours to fly to Perth. The nearest city to Perth is Singapore!

The taxi driver was from Kenya and we had a long chat about Thika as he dropped us off at our hotel. We had arranged to meet Paula's sister in law, Elaine and she took us to a Thai restaurant and ended up on her apartment overlooking the river. The next day she took us to Freemantle, a lovely coastal resort beach area for lunch. We did the tourist bus around the Perth the next day and came back to the beach watching all the barbeques ready for the free film show on a floating platform.

So on to Perth's nearest city Singapore. We stayed with Emma, the lady who jumped in the pool at my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday party who had moved to Singapore to see her son. She had an apartment in a nice complex with a swimming pool but she didn't like air conditioning and we had to sweat it out in near 90% humidity. She managed to get us a free lift into the city somehow and we did the tourist thing on a bus trip around the city and then into the bar in Raffles Hotel for a Singapore Sling cocktail. So that was the end of a lovely break but back to boring UK in a terrible long haul flight. Never again!

## **The Marion Hogben saga**

One of the first things we did in Spain was to attend Spanish lessons. They were organised by the Ayuentimento (town hall) and the classes were held in the building on the opposite side of the road to the Flag round about at the bottom of our road, Calle San Boi. This kick started a load of friendships: Gill and Perry. He was a carpenter and Gill is still taking lessons today and speaks with a cockney accent. Her neighbours on the road to Alhaurin opposite Miralmonte were Jill and Joan, then there was Sue and her husband, he had retired from the Army as a Colonel in the Royal Signals regiment, a staunch Welsh Rugby supporter but ended up a bit of a recluse. Dave Simpson was also in the Signals and lived with his wife Eve who lived in El Sexmo, just the other side of Cátamar Estation. Then there was Mandy who we saw recently as a Carer of one of my bridge class pals, Don Balmer who was a Counsellor and Psychotherapist in Kenya and we used to have limited conversations in Swahili.

Then there was Marion. Her husband Dave was also in the Signals and knew the other Dave but unfortunately he died shortly after they moved to Spain but Marion refused to be down hearted and continued living in Spain. They had bought a lovely Finca just at the back of the Los Delicios urbanisation up the road where Rick Parfitt lived, the Status Quo guitarist. I bumped into him in our local Indian restaurant, Mumtaz Mahal picking up a carry out and complained to him about the result of my head banging days to his music. Marion's house had a lovely view of Coin and the Gualdehorce valley. It had a 12 metre pool and we had a lot of parties there.

Dave and Eve were very close to Marion after her husband's death and looked after her helping out with all the bureaucracy and in the garden. Her water came from a deep well which involved a pump and years later the water level lowered and she had to drill the well for more deeper water. Through Marion we met a load of people and got involved with "Handy Andy" a Danish gentleman who had a large house in a strange urbanisation in Ceralba on the road out to Alora. He claimed to be a psychic healer and I went to one of his sittings but only felt a bit tired after his budhist type mutterings. He was known as a bit of a womaniser and we had him round to one of our barbecue parties when Joan was here and he tried it on with her but got a true Fife backlash.

He was part of another group of people who all lived in that direction and we went up into the hills towards Casarabonela where a German chap Rudi lived. It was a Hansel and Gretel type of house in a forest with stunning views down the valley. He had a DVD player with an amplifier and speaker which worked off a battery all on a trolley which he carried about to various parties for a sing song complete with all the song sheets so that everybody could sing along. We went down to Torremolinos and sat on the beach one day for a sing song and sandwiches much to the delight of the locals some of whom joined in. Of course I had to make up a fairy story about them when they all came for a party in our villa.

## A fairy story.

Once upon a time , a long long time ago in a land far faraway, there lived a JGG: No not a Jolly Green Giant, but a Jolly Germanic Gnome  
He was always laughing and singing and playing with the girls but sometimes his playing with the girls was a little bit on the naughty side and a bit rude as he wanted to get his hands up the little fairies' vests so they all called him Rudi.

But Rudi had a magical music machine that enchanted everyone including the girls he wanted his evil way with but you couldn't help singing along to his magical music.

But because he was a little on the stupid side for a gnome he had to write all the words down so that he wouldn't forget them. Just as well 'cause all his friends were a bit on the stupid side as well. Well probably not stupid but acted like they were after drinking lots of Germanic Pixie Pilsner.





That was a long time ago but Rudi lived a long time right up to the age of technology. But he couldn't part with his lovely old hand carved magical music machine which still enchanted everybody. And he went to everyone's parties and played his lovely music and everyone fell under his spell. And then one day he heard about a grumpy old man who lived in Coin who needed cheering up on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday so he took his lovely old machine along to the grumpy old man's house and began to cast his spell.



First he plied him with Riesling then Amaretto and eventually the spell started to work and the grumpy old man forgot all his worries and started to sing along with all his friends at his birthday party. But because he had to use a very very strong spell to make the grumpy old man sing, the power of the spell started to overflow and things started to get a bit silly. The girl fairies were getting overcome by the spell and started to dance and behave like very naughty fairies and Rudi was getting very excited as gnomes do.



Marion was the sort of gang leader and we had some great times and one party at our place which was hilarious with everybody dancing about like lunatics. Marion had trained as a ballet dancer and had appeared in local theatrical entertainments in Southend. One of her boy friends was called Trevor, a classic car member and we had a soiree at Marion's one night and had been informed of a meteor cluster and lay on our backs on her pool side loungers giggling away but to no avail for any meteors.

She had a son Lee in Australia whom we met when we went out there. He was in between jobs and a bit depressed so we bought him a meal in Darling Harbour bay in Sydney. She then met John and they tried to have a secret night out at the Miral monte restaurant but we discovered them causing much blushes and so her life blossomed and they eventually got married. John was a high flying Civil Servant in charge of the Ministry of Defence budget handling billions of pounds worth of military equipment,

Their wedding was an enchanting event held at the Santiago's Kitchen in Alhaurin el Grande in the garden in the shade under the trees which were illuminated at night. There was a disco and I remember jiving with an Irish lady and getting a round of applause.

Marion along with Dave and Eve, Fay and I would all meet up every Saturday morning at Mazza's breakfast bar at the bottom of our road on the horse round about. This opened at six in the morning for the workers in the industrial estate opposite in El Rodeo for their coffee and brandy and they would return at ten thirty for a full breakfast, it was run by Miguel and his wife and large son Miguel and Anna the energetic waitress who seemed to be everywhere all at once. We went there for several years and one week they closed down for decorating and we went along the road to the Meson de Rodeo and Miguel was there and paid for all our breakfasts. We weren't expecting that! Can you imagine that happening in the UK?

Marion and John sold up here in Coin and moved down to a lovely house in La Cala and we would get invites to their cocktail parties and would meet all their new friends and one year we got introduced to Gerry and Carol who were selling up down there on the coast

and moving up to Coin. So we now had some new fresh friends who weren't bridge players! They had both retired from the Met Police and we helped them through the various bureaucracies in the town halls of Coin.

## **Our second Christmas in Spain**

It all started just after I'd had my second operation on my shoulder. It was the right one this time. The surgeon said I now had the shoulders of a young man. Fay asked if she bring me back to do the rest. Cheeky cow!

That was Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008, the op was at 10 o'clock in the morning and I was out by 8 o'clock at night. Fay drove me back in trepidation waiting for any terse criticism of her driving but I managed to shut my mouth as Christmas was getting very close and I didn't want to jeopardise any chance of missing out on my annual festive season present!

The bridge club had their Christmas special the following week at Sol Andalus. As part of the TAPAS group of recreation events, we were joined after the buffet by some of the choir who had been rehearsing in the theatre across the patio from our club room. Some members of our club were a little hesitant at paying 10 Euros for the tapas meal but it turned out to be extremely good value with some unusual dishes and with so much left over the choir had to help out and in thanks duly gave a short rendition of some of their Christmas songs. It was lovely being serenaded and the following week we went to see the real thing.

"Rocking around the Christmas Tree" was the theme and I had painted a juke box for them which was visible right at the front of the stage. (Unlike the previous show where all the bloody actors were standing in front of the stage scenery paintings and you could hardly see my masterpiece.) Well it was a lovely production, not just singing but variety as well with comic acts and professional singers with their solo performances.

The Spanish Class broke up on the 20<sup>th</sup> December and some of our class had an impromptu Xmas lunch at the local Chinese restaurant. Poor Fay had to stay at home awaiting the delivery of our Christmas Cards from the UK, but managed the lunch just in time. We didn't have the cards yet but the promise of a phone call the next day. No doubt everybody will by now be fully aware of the Christmas card saga!

We had a reunion of workers in the garden with Richard doing the rendering of all the walls round the side and back and Dave doing his digging bit in the middle garden. As usual Richard was a tad hungry with only his "lunch box" (a meagre 5 kilos of provisions!) to rely on so we had to go and buy some chips. This quickly changed Dave's mind into staying a bit longer! Fay's little helper Nick came round to do the painting once Richard had finished and no sooner had Fay and Nick finished, the heavens opened up and it chucked it down. For a week!

But the show must go on and the TAPAS Christmas party was next on the agenda at the Sol Andalus complex again. We sat on the top table with the Chairman Mick (ex Lord Mayor of York) and his wife Cath. We met John and Sue and their adopted son Ben, a lovely lad from Birmingham who must have been the youngest in the room buy a few decades but bravely stayed the course watching the old fogies making complete idiots of themselves on the dance floor. The food was lovely and we had two professional singing cabaret artists to dance the night away with. Unfortunately my shoulder was still a bit stiff and Fay was crippling herself in the high heels, so we kept the jigging down to a minimum.



The Xmas tree sales staff at Janne's annual event.

Our lovely neighbours, Janne and Benny, took their family back to Denmark for Christmas so I drove them down to the airport and returned being left in charge of their menagerie: two dogs, two cats and a killer rabbit who had to be fed and watered every day. We had helped them out at Janne's new shop in Fuengirola the week before selling Xmas trees. Janne had everything organised so well. There was a Father Xmas, a plastic reindeer and sleigh, a snow machine and a production line for packaging the Xmas trees. She sold 140 trees on that Saturday. And then we had them round for Janne's birthday on the 19<sup>th</sup> for dinner with the kids. We gave her a birthday present and they gave us Xmas presents. Fay got a lovely Prima Donna bra and I only got a bottle of Malt whiskey, bottle of Chivas Regal and an ordinary whisky! Skinflints! Once again they have embarrassed us with their generosity.

Our other lovely Spanish neighbours Manuel and Puri invited us to their Choral Society concert at the church in Coin again. (Remember last year's)

Unfortunately it was hissing it down and also the final of Strictly Come Dancing was on so I'm afraid we missed this lovely occasion.

The next social occasion was Majorie's party on the 23<sup>rd</sup> for all the behind the scenes people of the TAPAS theatre gang. It was still raining but it was a lovely evening with Marjorie's son organising a quiz. He is a quiz fanatic in the UK and this became apparent with questions varying from: "What is the lowest score you cannot get at darts?" to "What mathematical constant C is represented in Einsteins E=MC2 equation?" the winning couple got 30 marks out of 80, we managed to come third with 26 marks and a prize of a Chinese calendar which we'd already got. We tried to leave it behind but Marjorie caught us and we had to take it home!

On Xmas Eve we went out shopping at La Trocha and bumped into Gerald (Dave's neighbour) and then Richard and Sue with Richards parents who had just driven down from France the day before. So we had to go and have a coffee with them and then bumped into Sue and had to take her back home as she needed Xmas paper. (the shops had run out) it was then that we found out she was an ex member of BACP so her and Fay were talking Counselling and Psychotherapy for some time. (Another siesta buggered up).

Christmas day and the rain relented and out came the sun. No children, no guests, the home alone old fogies had decided to let someone else do the cooking so off we went to the Santa Fe restaurant. Five hours and six courses later we staggered out knowing what a Xmas turkey feels like, completely stuffed. What a beautiful meal. Different wines with each course including a 1927 Pedro Ximenez sherry which was to die for. We met a young family on holiday with two children

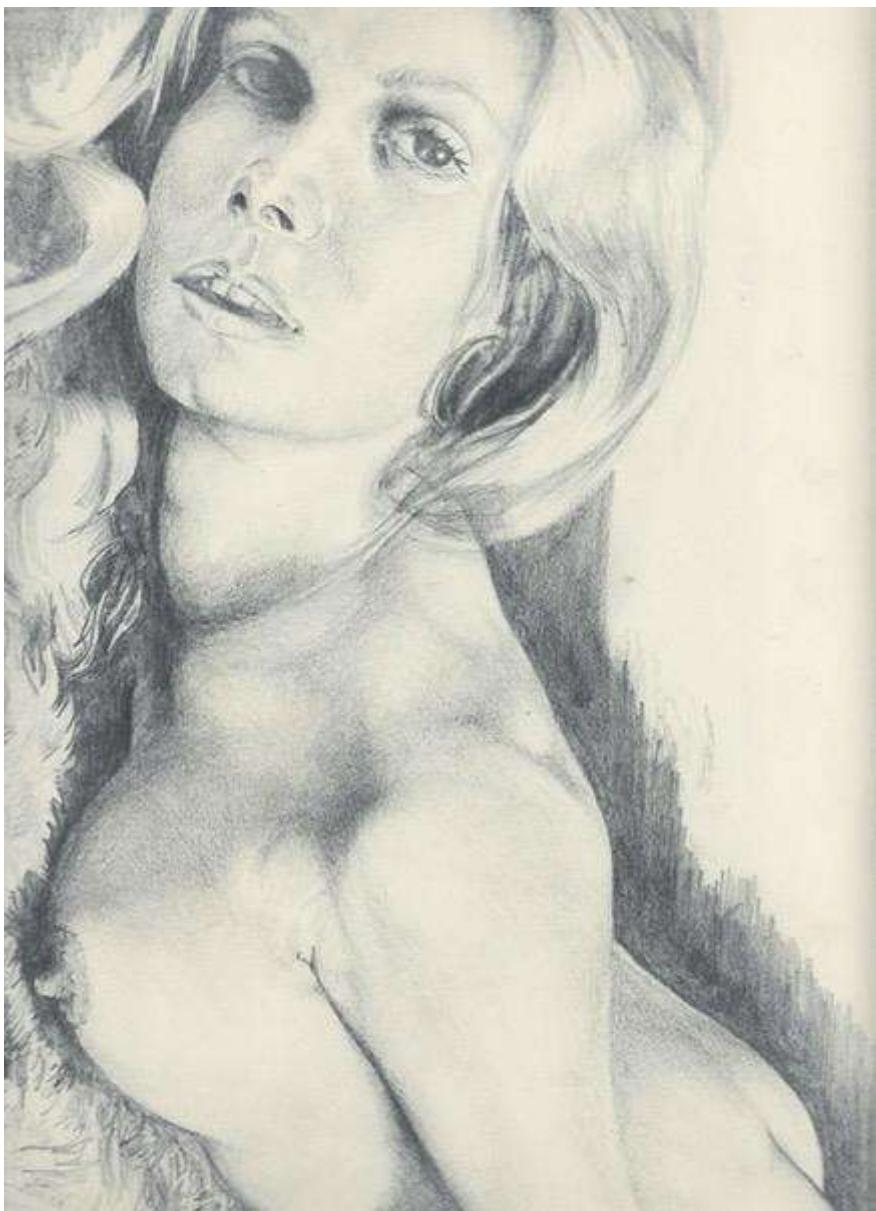
who had been given a scooter for Xmas and I helped them with their time trials round the swimming pool. We sat outside with a cigar and a drink before the meal and during various fag breaks to let the solids digest. It was a lovely lunch.

## **Beautiful women**

Again this has nothing to do with my memoirs apart from the fact that I married one. But when you have an artistic bent *like what I got*, it is very difficult not to look at anything beautiful especially when there is a plethora of them here in Spain. I feel akin to Titian, Rubens, and Modigliani who all had an eye for lovely ladies, fortunately I have Fay to bring me back to reality with a quick knee in the knackers if I am caught ogling for too long.



My pencil drawing of Fay during our courting days



My pencil drawing of Catherine Deneuve,  
obviously not live but from a photograph

Anita Ekberg, now there was a force to be reckoned with. A perfect figure and pouting lips and that said voluptuousness in spades, (back to bridge?) born in Malmo in Sweden (been there) I didn't see a lot of her in films but the little I did see was enough for her to remain in my fast decreasing memory bank.

Catherine Deneuve I would class in the sophisticated section of beautiful women but had little voluptuousness about her, but there was a long forgotten James Bond actress in "Thunderball", Lucianna Paluzzi who had that in buckets full. She was another one who disappeared but not in my memory bank. Then there was what most people would describe as the most beautiful woman, Bo Derek. I'm afraid she did nothing for me at all when she would drive most men up the wall. She was to me, too beautiful, she was too perfect, she had no characteristics, no blemishes which really added to the intrigue of a beautiful woman. She probably didn't think much of me either, but hey ho!

One of the most underrated sexy actresses in my mind was Stella Stevens. She was in that lovely film "The ballad of Cable Hogue". What sort of name is that? She played opposite Jason Robards whom she married and there was a enticing part of the film when she got caught having a bath in a barrel which I found extremely erotic. She had that lovely complexion, luscious lips and a button nose, that oozed sensuality similar to my lovely wife.

Another erotic scene, completely devoid of any nudity was in the film "The Ipcress File" when Barbara Roscoe asked Michael Caine if he always wore his glasses. "I always take them off when I go to bed" he replies as she then slowly eases them off his head. I watched this film when I was in Kenya and went

straight out and bought a pair of glasses afterwards and have been waiting ever since for a young blonde to ask me when I take them off.

I am trying to think of any British ladies who I can class alongside Sophia in the class of beautiful voluptuous women with and the only one who comes to mind is Margaret Nolan. She was a small bit part actress who appeared in one Bond film and a few Carry On films, she was one of Harrison Marks' models in the early sixties but she had that certain sexiness about her which is hard to define. The only other English ladies that come to mind are the sixth form girls in the St Trinian's films with their gym slips and hockey sticks. That's sad isn't it but each to their own.

There are hundreds of sexy starlets abounding today but very few meet the "V" criteria, probably Pamela Anderson would fit the bill prancing around in a swimsuit in Baywatch. She is still a beautiful woman at the age of fifty plus. I think I must put Elizabeth Taylor up there alongside Raquel Welch as possible contenders. Jayne Mansfield, Audrey Hepburn, Diana Dors, Rita Hayworth et al are all sex goddesses but just lack that little sparkle to meet my stringent standards. I don't suppose any of them are particularly bothered, just bear with me. I do however have my eye on a probable new contender. Penélope Cruz. Now she has possibilities, a Spanish actress who with very similar features to Sophia Loren. That cheeky face and a very near voluptuous figure. I am keeping an eye on her for future developments.

Meanwhile I suppose I will just have to make do and wait for the next local religious Romaria Festival here in Coin when all the families jump into their wagons and go up into the hills for a weekend in procession. All the ladies get doled up in their

traditional Flamenco tight fitting colourful dresses and parade through town making a lot of old men very happy.



The ladies of the Romaria festival

## **Hospitals and the Ordoñez family**

We were walking home one day when we met a young Spanish lady who asked us if we could help her with her English and this was an opportunity for us to learn some Spanish so we met up later in our front garden and this started a long lasting relationship with her and her family, the Ordoñez family.

Christina was the eldest daughter of three, all extremely attractive ladies. She was a music teacher just finishing her teacher training. Her sister Mercedes worked in the Ayuntamiento in Coin, the town hall in Alemeda Square and her other daughter was another teacher Sophia, a typical Spanish beauty with jet black hair and flashing dark eyes. She was married to Fernando, or 'Nando as he was called, another teacher who was an athlete who did triathlons and lots of other healthy stuff.

Their parents were Pablo and Antonia who couldn't speak any English at all. He worked in a bank and they both did a lot of work for the church. They lived at number 3 Calle San Boi at the end of our road and also had a lovely town house attached to the church in the town centre. One of their windows looked into the church. It was a typical Spanish house with lots of religious clutter and family pictures with a large central table covered with a cloth hiding the heated coal stove underneath to keep you feet worm in the winter.

So we got to know the family although we didn't learn much Spanish but Christina got the benefit of our English. This was in April 2014 when Fay had her operation for colon cancer in the Clinico hospital in Malaga and Antony and Jes his Canadian girlfriend were

staying with us and helped with the logistics to visit Fay.

Then in the following October we had Paula and Joe over and had planned a visit to Toledo with the U3A. Previously I had a couple of faint feelings on my walk and Fay mentioned this to our doctor who promptly put me through the routine and the day before we were due to go to Toledo I had to go and have a treadmill test at the Clinico hospital in Malaga. Being a regular walker I thought nothing of it but the consultant thought otherwise and informed me that I had to go straight to the "Urgencia" and book in. "I'm sorry" I said, "I'm going on holiday tomorrow." "No you're not" says he and so we had to cancel our trip but we managed to persuade Paula and Joe to go.

The emergency department signed me in but as I was hungry I asked if I could go for a meal first and we had a sort of Last Supper with Paula and Joe and I had sausages! Well, I thought this would probably be my last chance of a decent meal for some time. So I was duly checked in and started my sojourn in hospital. I had to have an Angiogram which confirmed that my arteries were in a bit of a mess and that I would need a triple heart bypass. I shared the ward with a lovely Spanish gentleman, Jose who was due a similar operation but had complications which delayed my operation. Previously I shared with a young (30 year old) Spanish lad who was awaiting a similar heart operation. His young attractive wife visited with a bloody great big Black Forest Gateau, cut it into four and offered me a big piece. I explained my predicament and politely refused, I don't know what happened to him?

Visiting hours were extremely erratic : 9 to 9.30; 1 to 1.30 and 7 to 7.30 in the evening and our lovely

Ordoñez family took time to ferry Fay down to visit me as I awaited my time for the operation. As a non urgent patient I was kept waiting for a couple of days and eventually on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2014 I was ushered into the intensive care theatre and operated on and from then on kept in this darkened environment of medical monitoring equipment with green and white flashing lights with tubes sticking into me until I was able to make it back to the ward. Then I was put into a chest corset to give the rib cage time to weld back again and from splitting open after being cut in two.

Pablo and Antonia both knew the ins and outs of the Clinico hospital and so it made sense for them to take Fay down there even in the ridiculous visiting times. I remember them showing me round when Fay was having her operation and it was a rabbit warren of confusion with a choice of several different waiting rooms to choose from so Fay was very grateful for their kindness.

Jose eventually was discharged and I received other ward partners each with their families who came to visit them and they always came over to me first to check on my condition. One family of about a dozen (there was supposed to be a limit of four) visited and one of them had a stroke in our ward which caused a right old caffuffle with doctors and nurse flying about all over the place.

Trevor was over with Stu Cave and his kids which added to my visitors and the local butcher Pablo popped in to see me as well. They had to go back before I came out of the intensive care unit. It was not a nice place to be, kept in virtual darkness with only the tiny neon lights of the medical equipment monitors going up and down the vdu screens.

I was glad to get back to the ward and get back on to my legs albeit with a chest brace on. Mick and Margaret came to visit shortly after the operation and I needed to go to the loo, a journey of about 2 metres but failed dismally and fainted as Mick caught me and put me back into the bed with the help of the duty nurse.

Then I was allowed to go home and the cardiologist explained what I was allowed to do and what not to do. "So, can I smoke cigars then?" I sheepishly enquired. "No!". "Can I just have one at weekends?" "No!" "Not even one at Christmas?" "No, you will have to get rid of all your cigars!" I got the message and gave away all my cigars with the humidor which broke my heart but what the cardiologist says stays!

We have stayed friends with the Ordoñez family ever since and have had many enchanting parties with them. We also met up with Jose and his family who had an apartment in Fuengirola and they all came down from Madrid to visit us for a barbecue at our place which was another enchanting night.

Pablo and Antonia had their main living quarters in Coin centre living in a house joined to the church with one window into the church. It had balconies overlooking the street which was great for seeing all the ceremonies coming out of the church. I think Pablo and Antonia were church wardens and Pablo had made scale models of the thrones used in these religious festivals.



One of the Thrones in the Easter parade in Coin  
as seen from the Ordonez family balcony

They had Moroccan neighbours with three children and the mother was pregnant with the fourth and Antonia had to deliver it in lieu of the midwife's visit. The Ordoñez family took the kids under their wings and even took them to church. I think they were trying to convert them to Christianity.



The Ordoñez family daughters and Janne poolside.  
The things you see when you haven't got your gun!

## **Palm Tree Sunday**

(a short story)

One of the problems of being a member of the Unorthodox Turkish Baptist Church is that it is very difficult trying to find a local church as they are few and far between. But I have memories of one of their more interesting religious festivals which just so happens to fall on the last day before April Fool's Day.

I was out walking on my normal constitutional amble when coming back from the Sunday Market I came across an old friend, a Dutch lady who was accompanying a Swedish gentleman walking backwards with a trolley holding on to a very large pot containing a large palm tree.

Bugger! I'd forgotten it was "Walking backwards with a Palm Tree Sunday!"

One of the great religious festivals of our church. A special day when we could atone for our sins. It obviously had to be a very heavy load to make it worthwhile for all the sins we'd committed. In my case the heavier the load the nearer to Nirvana one would get.

It saves all that flagellation or dancing over burning coals stuff that other religions feel necessary for atonement. It also helps if the helpers just so happen to be from foreign countries as they will be unaware of your past indiscretions. I immediately rejoiced at being able to reconstruct my forgotten traditions and asked if I could help them and saying that it was not very often one gets to meet fellows in the same line of business, so to speak.

I got a rather strange look but continued to explain my deep rooted religious beliefs and the joy of having found someone of the same philosophy. I got an even stranger look and my Dutch lady friend explained that she was helping on old friend of hers who had just purchased the palm tree and pot at the local flea market at La Trocha just up the road and was just about to take it to his house just round the corner.

Well, I did feel a bit of a plonker but insisted that I be allowed to carry the load just a little bit down the road as I hadn't committed too many indiscretions recently since I had retired and explaining the deep rooted tradition that coincided with their task.

Now, this lovely erudite lady, one of the many who had read my books, gave me an even stranger look, thinking on the grounds that my books were biographical. God forbid. I hadn't realised the enormity of the self inflicted problem I had innocently caused. Obviously she had mistaken my vivid imagination for the real world.

At this moment in time another foreigner arrived with a car to help move the large load and I felt it best to bid them all a good day and get the hell out of it.

I got back home as soon as I could and picked up a little pot with something vaguely resembling a small palm tree in it and walked around the house backwards a few times hoping this would do for the time being.

(I was on my daily walk up to La Trocha on market day when I bumped into Lea who was helping her Swedish colleague to get a potted palm tree back home.)

## **Some more Bridge friends and Morocco**

You meet some lovely people in bridge clubs and Peter and Roswitha Berwick were no exception. They were what you would call a handsome couple. She was German and they lived in Harlow. They had an apartment in Alhaurin Golf. She was very energetic and dragged Peter all over the world visiting lots of exotic places and the same could be said for their bridge. Poor Peter really wasn't that keen on it but put up with her and persevered.

I had to empty Mum's house in Ashtead when she was moved to a care home near Guildford and Peter and Roswitha put me up in their lovely home in Harlow whilst I commuted to Ashtead everyday and they lent me one of their Honda SUV's. I filled 40 black garden sacks and took them to the Council tip.

I had to organise a home removal company but when I arrived I couldn't get into the house as Mum's hairdresser had taken the keys out of the key safe. I had problems with her before as she seemed to think she had some sort of power of Attorney over my Mum. We had to disperse Mum's capital for tax reasons to Trevor and Antony and this hairdresser had seen the cheques and contacted the police without contacting me. Antony was a little astonished when the police contacted him and explained he was her grandson. So I rang her and gave her a mouthful while the removal van and I waited for her to arrive. I eventually cleared the house and returned to Harlow after two days work. I thanked Peter and Roswitha and flew home.

The next adventure with them was a trip to Morocco. Roswitha had seen an article about a lovely little blue village up in the Atlas mountains that looked so romantic and dragged us along. We had tried to book but there was a problem and so we delayed it and tried again in the Spring but the weather wasn't very good and Peter and Roswitha had to fly back home so we took a chance and off we went. We drove down to Algeciras and got on the ferry. We nearly missed it as there were no displays announcing the departures.

Fay managed to hold back any sea sickness during the 30 minutes crossing to Tangiers. We looked for our taxi at the port but realised that we had to get on a bus to the port terminal and eventually managed to find our driver and his beaten up Mercedes taxi. We managed to squeeze into it and drove off to Chefchaouene . it was a walled town so we had to take our luggage by hand to the hotel. It was run by an English couple of hippies who obviously chose it because of the easy access to hashish. It was indeed as the brochures described it as a typical Moorish town house with a central open courtyard. It was raining so we all had to huddle around the top patio and secretly open our booze which was not allowed. If it had been in the Summer it would have been a lot more inviting but it was bitterly cold and no central heating. Our hosts cooked us a typical Moroccan meal which was half cold and so we retired to our rooms and loaded up the blankets and duvets for a shivering night rest.

Roswitha had organised our taxi driver for the duration so after a walk round the blue town we set off to Tétouan, the nearest town and walked around the typical souk. We found a nice cake and coffee shop and indulged ourselves and a local artisan's workshop and our taxi driver shepherded us into a local cafe to eat

with the locals. I'm afraid I wasn't impressed, I'd had better meals in the NAAFI.

That night we tried a restaurant in the town's hotel, all very typical Moorish furnishings and tajine food but no booze. The sun shone the next day so we had a walk around Chefchaouene with it's market and the monotonous calling from the Minaret with the faithful, dressed in their white Burnooses all being dragged to prayer every four hours.

They were obviously very poor, we saw an old lady sitting on a stool selling individual boiled sweets and there was a washing pool in the small stream going down the side of the village. Our taxi driver took us to a road side ceramic factory and we bought some nice local salad dishes which were half the price if those in Spain the only trouble being carrying them back.

The weather cleared for a visit to Cabo Nagro a tourist resort set up on the coast of the Alboran Sea just East of Tétouan. It was vastly different from the poor inland areas and we stopped for a drink but it was obviously closed for the season. So on the last day we made our way back to Tangiers and said good bye to our taxi driver and gave him a tip but he wanted more. Then we went to the ticket office but were told to come back later which confused us as we could see the ferry waiting for us to embark. But then from the back of the ticket office a man came who offered to help us which of course involved paying extra which we were not happy about but thought it best to just get the hell out of this bloody place asap. Fay bravely managed the crossing without being sick as we played bridge in the restaurant and were glad to be back home again.

## **Caligraphy**

Can't remember when I first started caligraphy, it must have been when I was doing my ONC at Aylesbury because I had to do a three thousand word thesis and so I started after picking it up from school I think. My thesis was on Leonardo da Vinci and it looked lovely the only problem being that each page had to have equal borders either side of the page which meant planning ahead and make sure the spelling was ok as well. By the time I got down to the bottom of each page if there was a spelling mistake I couldn't be arsed to start all over again so when I got scores I was told I would have got top prize apart from twenty three spelling mistakes.

Then when I was in Kenya I did the One Hundred Pounder Club certificates for the Safari company Kerr, Downey and Selby and got paid handsomely. I kept up small projects for people for birthday and anniversary cards but when I started the bridge classes for the U3A I asked around to see if there was any interest in a calligraphy class and started one up. It wasn't as large as the bridge class, no more than half a dozen attendees but went well up to Covid.

My main project was designing and printing personal Xmas Cards every year as an act of defiance in the Moonpig and Janet Lawson era when it was too easy just to press a few buttons on your PC to send a greeting. Also I could do individual birthday, anniversary cards et al as well which went down well as it was a sign of somebody making an effort to pass on the wishes. I had a lovely old lady in my class, she was incredibly interesting having married somebody who did all the set designs building for Elstree Studios such as Cleopatra and had a fascinating time amongst the stars. Anyway she did a Xmas card and to be honest it was rubbish but I got it printed out and she sent them off

and was staggered by the response because it had shown everybody that not only was it personal but that she had made a special effort. I am now helping her with her life story which starts off with her working with Stanley Kubrick. Not a bad starter to kick off with?

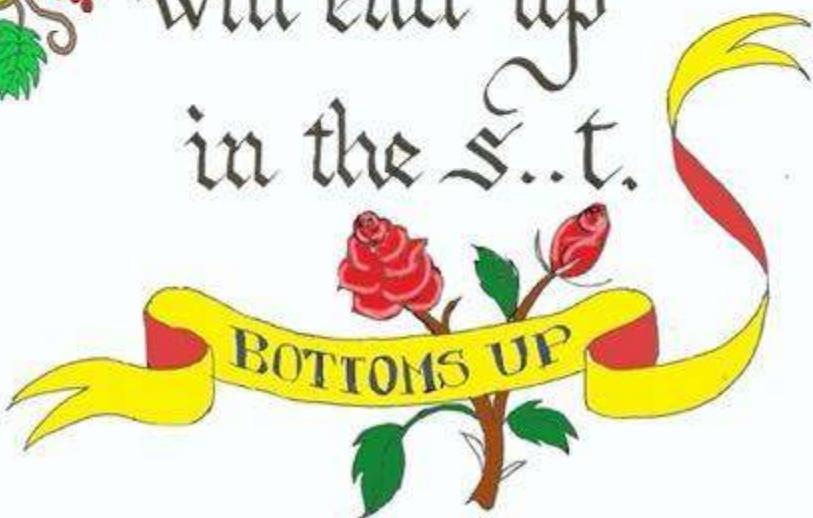
So here are a few of my calligraphically works should anybody like to use them to their own needs.



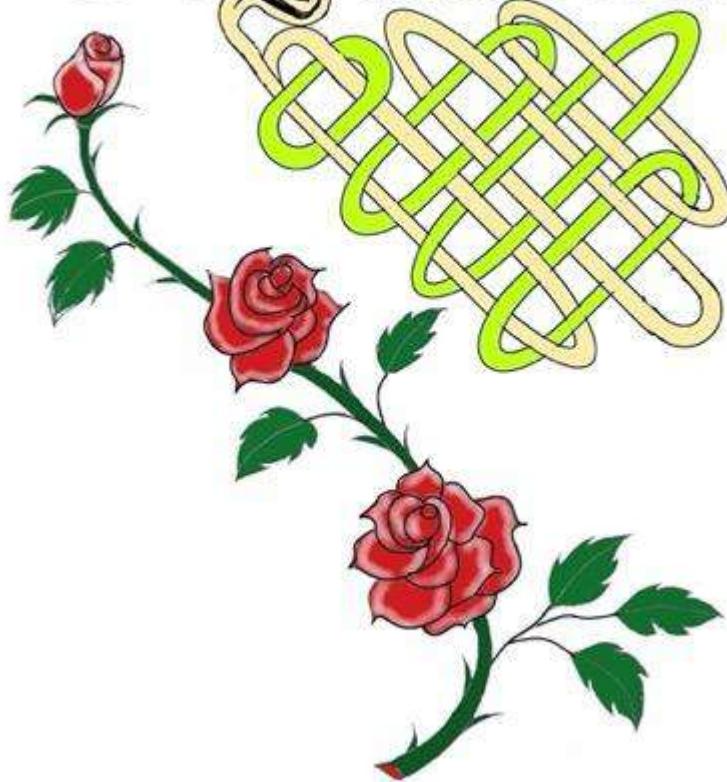


wish I was a  
caterpillar.  
Life would be  
a farce.  
I'd climb up all  
the apple trees  
and slide down on  
my hands & knees.

Check the paper  
before you sit  
or your fingers  
will end up  
in the S...t.



Congratulations









# Hugge

(hoo - gah) verb

1. the art of building sanctuary & paying attention to what makes us feel open hearted and alive.
2. to create well being, connection and warmth.
3. a feeling of belonging to the moment and to each other.
4. celebrating the everyday.

La  
Faç  
comienza  
con una  
Sonrisa



I also did some sign writing. Firstly for Janne when she opened her flower shop in Fuengirola and then a few spin offs from that for her Danish friends. I had to do a project for one of her pals who lived down in Alhaurin de la Torre and I think they were somehow associated with Ikea as they wanted the Ikea logo "a beautiful everywhere" painted on the side of their pool house. It was in a large garden with a beautiful house on the hillside overlooking the valley. I also did a project in a baby shop in Fuengirola with a little help from Stewart. I dropped the paint pot on the pavement at the entrance and had a hell of a job clearing it up. But then the Danish couple Keld and Lonne wanted the lovely "S" poem doing next door.

## Pensions

One of the benefits of working for the Equitable Life was access to the company's personal pension funds which were considered the most profitable in the country at the time. At its peak in the 1990s, Equitable had 1.5 million policyholders with funds worth £26 billion under management, but it had allowed large unhedged liabilities to accumulate in respect of guaranteed fixed returns to investors without making provision for adverse market changes. The company came close to collapse, and we had the option of cashing in the policy but at a penalty and moved the fund to another pension fund.

And so after we had moved to Spain we became aware of QROPS. A Qualifying Recognised Overseas Pension Scheme that meets certain requirements set by HM Revenue and Customs which can receive transfers of British pension benefits. The QROPS programme was part of British legislation launched on 6 April 2006 as a direct result of EU human rights requirements of the freedom of capital movement.

A certain Emma Cox, a financial consultant based in Fuengirola introduced us to this and she administered the necessary transfers which involved New Zealand and she set up a portfolio for us which was giving us a good return of about 7 %. She later came up with another portfolio Athena 7 which sounded too good to be true which later turned out to be true. It was supposed to give a return of 10% but after several months it became apparently very clear that there was something horribly wrong. The certificates we were given bared no resemblance to our original investment with all sorts of meaningless gobbledegook and in the end it was quite clear that this was a scam even though

it had been backed up by several well known financial institutes who knew nothing about this scheme.

We still had some of our original portfolio left in the Indian Ocean Asset company was taken over by Richard Alexander who helped the investigation into Athena 7 which involved chasing after an Irishman who had companies in the Isle of Man and Dublin. We had meetings in La Luna, our bridge club venue in El Coto run by Russell and Georgina this was back in 2010 and in 2022 the Irish Garda came over to Malaga and held meetings with all the investors at the Malaga police station. This involved the accountant based in Dublin, John Lynch, who was part of the original set up and some bridge club friends of ours who lived near Dublin paid him a visit on our behalf and he pleaded innocent but still held on to the residue of the portfolio which is still being investigated.

Richard Alexander still looks after our minimalistic portfolio and drags us out for nice lunches in Marbella now and then and has read all my books and obviously thoroughly enjoyed them. Well that's what he said anyway.

## **The Susan and David saga**

Lloyd Danvers and I played bridge at Lutterworth and also at the Rugby bridge club in the Warwickshire league which involved travelling to Warwick and Stratford upon Avon. We also played at Blaby bridge club and then in the Leicestershire league which meant travelling as far afield as Loughborough and Melton Mowbray. We played for the Blaby "B" team where we met Susan and David. We preferred the "B" team to the "A" team they were a bit stuck up and we used to have a lot more fun in the "B" team.

Susan Fennel and David Petrie were retired teachers. He was a big Leicester Tigers fan and had a grandson who played for the Tigers Academy. We became great friends and after our move to Spain kept up our friendship. They lived in a lovely house up near the racecourse in Leicester where they held bridge soirees. We would meet up some times in Tenerife during our visits to Ian and Delia's apartment. We would meet up in the Arona Gran hotel in Los Christianos where they stayed.

We organised a trip to Madrid going up on the High Speed Train from Malaga and agreed to meet up with Susan and David on our return trip to via Cordoba. The trip up to Madrid took two and a half hours with nothing but the view of olive trees. It is an interesting fact that although Italy sells a lot of olive oil, it buys most of it from Spain.

We arrived there in the station with a beautiful botanical garden and found our way to our hotel Velasquez. This was a lovely old traditional Spanish hotel where the rich Madrilènos ladies would come for an evening drink after shopping. The ladies all smoked

and men all wore sports jackets, brown brogue shoes and smoked cigars as I joined them with a cigar in the bar. The bar ceiling was tinged in smoke but oozed character.

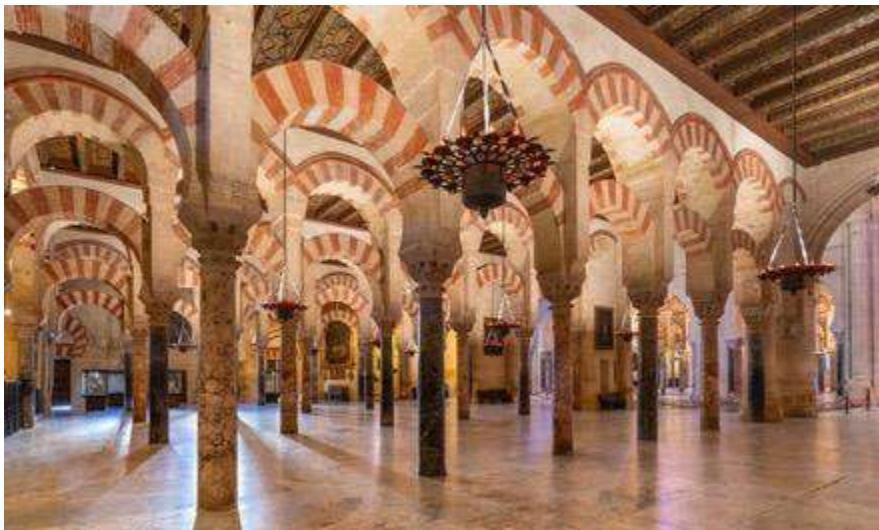
We did all the touristic venues: the Prado and the Thyssen art galleries and had afternoon tea in the Grand Hotel and said goodbye to Madrid and our next stop was Cordoba to meet up with Susan and David. We arrived there during the festival of the patio flowers when all the houses could show off their patios and courtyards. The place was heaving so we had a bit of difficulty finding a hotel but ended up in the red light district in a nice little boutique hotel. It turned out to be the place the judges of the flower festival used that night.

We toured the Mezquita, an incredible Christian cathedral built inside a Moorish mosque, so large it was dark at the end of the passage of arches. Maureen and Jeremy had recommended a restaurant called El Caballo Rojo, so we had to go there as part of our grand tour.

Susan and David returned home with us to Coin and played bridge with us in our local club in Alhaurin Golf. We next met up in Nerja where they rented a villa on top of a hill with stunning views of Torrox Costa. Then it was David's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and Susan organised a surprise party for him so we booked into the Balcon de Europa hotel set out on a promontory in Nerja. We had a lovely meal that night at Restaurant 34, a charming place on the top of the cliffs just outside Nerja overlooking the coast.

We found a bridge club in Nerja and had a pleasant afternoon there with mostly Brits and it wasn't long before David had dementia and wasn't able to travel. Susan had sent him back to his family and met

up with her and her ex husband who came out with her for another visit to Nerja.



The Mezquita cathedral in Cordoba

## **Jerez, Cadiz & Barcelona**

Once we got settled in our new home and with our new Nissan X Trail car, we decided to go travelling around Spain and so invited some of our friends to join us. We set off with Paula and Joe to Jerez which is about 200 kilometres from Coin on the main autovias. It took us about two and half hours with coffee breaks en route and we finally arrived but couldn't find the hotel. This was in the days before we had SatNav. We had to book a taxi and follow it to the hotel.

Jerez is famous for two things, the sherry and the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art so we made our way to the Tio Pepe winery and had a guided tour which included a visit to see the famous little wooden mouse that had its own ladder to get up to taste the sherry. Obviously we had to join in with a tasting afterwards and then on the see the famous Lipizzaner Horses in the Royal Equestrian School. They did a routine in this beautiful theatre which was quite breathtaking and then a walk around the grounds to see the stables.

We found a lovely little tapas bar restaurant in one of the back streets in the shadow of the Alcazar castle and Cathedral. We had taken the direct route from Algeciras to Jerez on the way there and so took the route via Tarifa on the way back. This was down the west coast, the Costa de la Luz or the windy coast as the locals call it. Tarifa is a lovely little old town but seemed to me to be built the wrong way round. The West coast of the town where one would imagine all the bars and restaurants to be was an industrial estate. But we found a nice little restaurant in the quaint streets of the old town.

So our next outing we planned was with Fay's cousin Anne and Stewart to go to El Puerto de Santa Maria just across the bay from Cadiz. Another three hour trip down via Gibraltar and along the Costa de la Luz coast. This time we had time to take in the full beauty of the coast and popped in to the Ruinas de Bologna an old Roman settlement on the beach with a stunning views and sand dunes to the north of the beach. There wasn't an awful lot to see at the Roman ruins but the coastal scenery was stunning. We found a scruffy little chiringuita for lunch with a load of cats and just sat and marvelled at the breathtaking view which shut up even Fay and Anne, the famous Scottish bletherers for a good hour.

And then on to Puerto Santa Maria and booked into the hotel on the sea front. We had a wash and brush up and wandered round the town. It was deserted but we did manage to find a shoe shop. We showered and went out for an evening meal and walked across the road from the hotel to a charming little bar restaurant. It was run by a family with a rather attractive daughter to look after us who could speak a bit of English. The floor was packed earth and it was in a small orchard with the trees all lit up. We had a laugh asking for cushions for the seats and got our "cohines" mixed up with our "cohones". Cushions or Testicles? It was quite enchanting and the food was excellent.

The next day we took the ferry across the bay to Cadiz and found a nice tapas bar in the centre of town and returned to the hotel, got cleaned up and went out into the main part of Puerto de Santa Maria. It was heaving and we managed to find a restaurant in the main drag but only inside until eventually we were able to sit outside in the balmy evening air and enjoy our meal watching all the locals promenading. We must

have been the only Brits there and felt really honoured to enjoy the typical local Spanish atmosphere.

There was a famous fish restaurant there where you pointed to a counter for your choice of fish or shellfish and the amount you wanted which was then scooped up and put in a paper cornet with chips etc or your choice from the salad bar and then you sat down outside and eat it by hand. The choice was incredible, just like a large butcher's marble slab with some sorts of fish we didn't recognise at all.

They had a Osborne winery there so we did a tour of that which was started by a British family but eventually run by the Spanish now and it was pronounced *osborney*. Another lovely week away with friends.

Our son Antony was well travelled after graduating from Leeds University in Graphic Design and with his Canadian girlfriend ended up running a floating restaurant off the coast of Panama after travelling through Mexico. He went to a wedding in Greece with some of his uni friends where his girl friend ditched him and ended up living with us. Obviously his wanderlust moved him on to a two week Spanish language course in Barcelona and that's the last we saw of him. He met the lovely Lisa and we got invited up to stay for a weekend as he showed us round all the delights of the beautiful city.



The view of the Sagrada Familia cathedral  
from Antony's flat.

They found a lovely apartment on the sixth floor overlooking the beautiful Sagrada Familia cathedral which was in the process of being built. Now when the boys were still living with us and even when we meet up they still enjoy board games such as Risk and Monopoly. We introduced them to a lovely game called *Hair and Tortoise* named after Aesop's fables. It is my favourite game even though it is an intellect game and my lovely wife often beat me. I did actually write to the game people and complain about this but they said that I should realise that my wife was more intellectual than me!

It involves moving around the board at your own pace, the problem being the faster you moved the more costly it became. For example one move cost one carrot

whereas two moved cost three carrots so it was an exponential curve. Therefore you had to plan ahead to take advantage of the pitfalls and bonuses that could be had around the board. The children got bored with that and preferred Risk or Monopoly. Trevor enjoyed the cut and thrust of the battle in Risk and we all enjoyed Monopoly. Now what I'm getting at is that I can understand Monopoly money but Antony's neighbour in Barcelona was a bit of a high flier dealing in digital currencies, Bitcoins etc.

Although I don't fully understand the intricacies of Quantum Physics I have a rough idea of what it's all about. But Bitcoins. I'm sorry but I just cannot conceive of the idea of buying and selling stuff digitally with reference to Sterling or Euros or Dollars. Anyway, one night at the Alhaurin Bridge Club, Antony sends us a text asking if we know anybody called Rittener. Fay and I are only on the same table as Maureen and Jeremy Rittener, they run the club so we replied and got a text back with a picture from Antony of him with his next door neighbour. We showed this to Maureen and Jeremy who said "that's our son!" We took a quick snap of them and sent it back to Antony."That' my Mum and Dad" said Graham. It's a funny old world this bridge malarkey isn't it?

We managed to get up to see Antony and Lisa in Barcelona and were shown the beautiful Gaudi buildings including a walk round inside the cathedral whilst the work was still in progress. I think it's very near completion now. The last time we arrived on the Thursday but Lisa had picked up some information about Covid and we managed to get the last flight out of Barcelona the following morning before complete lock down otherwise we would have been in Lockdown with them for a couple of months. Phew!

Maureen and Jeremy with us at the Alhaurin Bridge Club (the picture we sent to M & J's son in Barcelona).





The Sagrada Famila cathedral in Barcelona

## **Our international friends and bureaucracy.**

Spain is not all sunshine and sangria, just fun with friends. On Saturday we went to Jan's lovely apartment overlooking the Alhaurin Golf course and the rolling hills down to the coast and played bridge. We met up with some old friends, Trish and Di whom we hadn't seen since the Covid crisis. Jan baked a delicious Victoria Sponge cake for tea and of course Fay and I won the bridge. We all said our goodbyes and Jan suggested we go to the BP garage for supper with our Dutch friend Lea. (She has read and enjoyed all my books) So we met again at the garage at the end of the Alhaurin Golf complex and shared an Ensalada Cesar and a bucket of Patatas Bravas. These are like small potato wedges, deep fried and lovely and soft inside with an aioli dip. A nice glass of wine followed as we watched the sunset.

We were meeting up the next day to go down to Las Lagunas for lunch with our Austrian friend Eva to celebrate her birthday. She had had a stroke and was paralysed on one side. Jan and Lea had visited her in a home in Benalmadena and Eva wanted to meet up with all her friends again since her illness and had booked a restaurant run by Pablo, her physiotherapist. He was the one who found her in her house lying on the kitchen floor and had looked after her since her stay in hospital. So we agreed a time and I would chauffeur the ladies in "Paddy's Bordello" down to the lunch.

After some misunderstanding of maps we arrived in this delightful little chic restaurant down near Fuengirola. The other friends arrived and we settled down to a lovely meal. Fay and I had the Prawn Pil Pil which was delicious and the Coctel de Gambas which was a large plate full which Lea could hardly finish

leaving all her greens. The main course was a choice of entrecote, chicken or this lovely Foi de Manzana which I chose having planned ahead seeing the pudding menu.

The steak was enormous and Fay had the Chicken Parmesano which was too much for her but my dish was three cooked apple rings with a strawberry and mango salsa topped with Foi Gras. It was mouth watering and left room for the chocolate coolant afterwards. A sort of soufflé with chocolate running out over the rim of the pudding with ice cream at the side. There were about twenty of us with Eva's Spanish, German and Austrian friends there and towards the end we all mingled talking to Eva in her wheel chair and I ended up talking to Hosé. We had met before at Eva's a few years ago, he was Spanish and had worked in the UK as an Editor and I had mentioned my books and we had got on well together and always ended up laughing. We were told off the last time by his wife (A Miss World representative for Austria) and once again for laughing. We said our goodbyes to Eva and I drove the ladies home.

I collapsed in one of our chairs with their new antimacassar coverings made by Lea for a short siesta and we watched the "Strictly come Dancing Results" show with the help of our remote Scottish panel by Whatsapp and at the end of the night I watched the Leicester Tigers against Saracens match in the pouring rain with a ball like a "bar of soap". The last time they had played Saracens were at the top of the league and Tigers at the bottom and Saracens led 3 / 12 at half time. It was 6 / 12 in the 84th minute as Leicester were awarded a penalty try and won 13/12. The crowd erupted as I crawled to the bedroom after another enchanting day.

But now and then you get one of those really shitty days when absolutely nothing goes right. It was a double shitty squared day that started at 8.25 in the morning when I was rudely awoken by Fay to remind me that I had an appointment with the nurse at 8.29 for a blood sample test. With knowledge of the parking situation at the Health Centre Fay agreed to drive me there and drop me off and I ran into the "Enfermeria" past the long queues of vaccinations and sat down outside the nurse's room. As there was only one other person there I walked in but was rebuffed and had to wait until a slow stream of patients who arrived later had finished.

Bearing in mind we had an appointment in Marbella for our TIE application at 9.29, I was getting a tad frustrated as no doubt was my erstwhile chauffeur. Fay was getting a bit hectic and had to rush back home to complete her ablutions prior to zooming down to the coast. We made it with seconds to spare and I dropped her off at the Police station and luckily found a car park and a cafe nearby and sat and watched the station but within minutes Fay was out explaining that they had changed the type of appointments needed so that we had to make another appointment which would involve Annie our friendly bridge playing translator. I had a similar appointment the next day so that had to be cancelled and when I rang they just said "no pasanada", no worries mate.

So the next thing to do was book our ITV (MOT) test and after trying to figure out the Spanish ambiguities we were given a date in the next week which was non negotiable. Shit, we needed a few weeks gap to be able to pay for the new tyres needed but couldn't change the date for some reason. (It was explained in Spanish apparently).

Next on our list was to renew my driving license which would need a doctor's report of my health and as I had a telephone appointment due the next day with my blood test results we left it until the next day. Then we went to our friendly bridge club and got thoroughly stuffed and then upon our return home, at ten o'clock with my stomach in revolt and Fay watching bloody Wimbledon I had to do the cooking! Then just to put the last nail on the coffin we got news that Antony had to have his heart monitored.

Those were what you call a shitty days!

The next morning the sun was shining, well, it did that yesterday but we didn't notice it then, so a new day and off I went for my morning walk and diverted to the garage to get some help with this ITV lark but the lovely Christina wasn't there so when I got home I sat down and tried the internet again on the ITV web site and in a better mood than yesterday managed to figure out how to cancel the appointment. Things were looking up. Then Gill phoned with appointments for our TIE after we had met her at the bridge club last night. This was in Torremolinos, so that would be a first for us and no doubt an exciting day out!

A problem being that the Powers that be: the beaurocrats, had changed the form from an EX17 to an EX23. What happened to the EX18s to the EX22s is anybody's guess, but at least we were alerted.

Wow, things were really looking up and then, bless my soul the Doctor phoned and it was an English speaking version. I couldn't believe my luck and he answered all my queries and set in progress the necessary long overdue post op cardiology tests. So I pops up to the Health Centre and picks up my paperwork and the blood test results look ok and I get

an appointment for an ECG with the nurse on Tuesday and await for a visit to the Cardiology department for a routine check up. And then England win at football. It's all turning up roses.

I suppose roses need a bit of fertilizer now and then eh?

That Tuesday we had some friends round for a game of bridge: he was German and she was Belgian who spoke French, German, Flemish along with Spanish and English. On Wednesday we went to a lovely Italian restaurant in Fuengirola to celebrate a German lady's birthday with her English husband. On Thursday we got dragged next door to our new Danish neighbours to have an early Danish Xmas lunch before they returned to Denmark.

We had Friday off and on Saturday we picked up a Dutch lady in Alhaurin and went down to Benelmadena to a Spanish restaurant run by a lovely French family to have lunch with an Austrian lady who is recovering from a stroke. We were joined by her Austrian friends, he taught Spanish and English for the U3A.

On Sunday we went over to Mijas to have another Danish Xmas lunch with our old Danish neighbour and her Danish and Spanish family and friends. My current wife is Scottish and we have been trying to learn Spanish for the last fifteen years and can just about struggle with our Spanglish until we get a high speed reply and get completely confused. I can speak more Swahili than Spanish but can now master Double Dutch and gibberish.

# The Golden Wedding anniversary

There are lots of anecdotes about married couples but I can never understand why people always say that Fay deserves a medal for putting up with me for so long. Why is it that the men always get the short straw? Do we not get some sort of long service medal as well for having to wait for our ladies while they choose from some of their thirty pairs of shoes or go through the trunk full of accessories to put on? The silent majority, that's us! I get my revenge by calling Fay my "First wife" which shuts her up for a couple of milliseconds.

So they said it would never last and here we are after 50 years of wedded bliss which rhymes with a piss up so "we", by that I mean Janne and the Ordoñez family decided to have a special party, all we had to do was pay for it. So Trevor, Lorraine and Shaelyn flew out from the UK and Antony and Lisa came down from Barcelona. Our condescending Danish neighbours let us put them up in their apartment and the organising Ordoñez committee with Janne kicked us out of the house for the day and set up the garden and pool patio.







Our orchestra led by Antony with the  
Ordoñez backing choir.



The pool table feast



The odd couple



The party in full swing.

## Xmas 2021

It all really started, or nearly ended when Trevor's house had an electrical fire and they had to be moved to a hotel. Fortunately he had an extinguisher in his van and minimised the damage. Then they got shunted about in hotels ending up in the Hinckley Island, a luxury spa hotel where Shaelyn took advantage of the spa inviting all her school friends to the pool.

As usual the parties started long before December 25<sup>th</sup> with Janne our ex Danish neighbour. (still Danish, but not a neighbour any more) celebrating her son, Sebastian's birthday with her new friend Carl Eric at his humble abode down past Mijas with Juan and family and the people who ran the Danish Centre.(He was a Le Mans 24 hour driver) .

Then we had a flying visit from our new Danish neighbours who dragged us next door for a very Danish feast. Then we had to go down to Benalmadena to see our Austrian friend Eva who was in a convalescent home.

We met Eva's Austrian friends Jose and Marie Louise, she was a very tall sophisticated lady who spoke her mind and when I showed her the cover of my book stated that I obviously liked ladies with big breasts and then said that my wife needed to get some scissors as I had a forest growing out of my nose!

Then Janne dragged us down to the Casa Navarra for her birthday treat where they did a mean steak. Then there was the U3A bridge class Xmas lunch at La Tavola, Sierra Gordo and the ABC bridge club dinner at Alhaurin Golf Club to contend with as well. Fay being the Hon Tres had to deal with sorting out who paid for what there.

We went down to stay with Anne and Stewart in La Cala and had to go out for a meal with them before they flew back to Scotland. And then we got a phone call from Fiona saying Anne and Stewart had lost their boarding cards along with all the Covid paperwork and we had to go and rescue them from Malaga airport and put them up for a couple of nights while they could arrange another flight back to Scotland. And then we heard that the Miralmonte restaurant had re opened so we had to go there with Anne and Stewart and what a transformation. They had completely refurbished and redecorated the place with the help of a Canadian lady interior decorator. The place was run by a Belgian with his sister and the service and food were excellent.

We learnt a lot from Anne and Stewart as to what we needed to get through the Covid regulations for leaving Spain and entering the UK. So Fay set about organising our trip back to the UK to stay with the family. I was quite looking forward to it for a rest until we got a phone call from a hysterical Lorraine saying Trevor was in an ambulance and couldn't breathe. He had previously snapped his Achilles tendon at a wedding down in Cornwall and that together with his back problems had started a nervous reaction to cause him to catch his breath.

This gave both Fay and I had a traumatic shock and I couldn't even eat my dinner which was one of Madge's special macaroni cheeses (named after the cook in the sergeants mess at RAF Greatworth). This caused a bit of a problem on the logistics front as he couldn't drive and Lorraine would need some help being the only driver. Trevor's insurance couldn't cover us and no insurance company would cover me being over 75. Fay could take out temporary cover for two weeks at the cost of £455! Our Spanish company said that the

Green Card they issued covered us for driving in Europe only. Oh, oh!

Now while all this was happening I was waiting for an operation in *dermatologia* on my ear to remove a cancerous lesion so I felt I should alert the hospital having already had all my pre op tests. We went down to Cártama and showed the paper with the surgeon's signature and my signature on a certificate of surgery. I was told this was not on the system and before I blew my top Fay got some sense out of the receptionist and we toddled off up stairs to someone with a brain and told them of the dates of leaving the country.

So we were now ready to go for our Xmas holiday. Fay had arranged the antigen tests at Malaga airport and the PCR tests at East Midlands airport. Our good friends Gary and Penny drove us down and looked after our car while we were away. We joined the pre booked queue for our tests and sat down waiting for the results. Fay got an e mail but nothing about me. So she went back to the desk and was told to check the passport numbers then realising that she had received my results and couldn't find hers until she looked in the junk mail box!

Phew! So we were now fully armed with both written and mobile evidence of Covid clearance and our boarding passes. Fay had been in touch with Margaret and found out she was on the same flight as us so we met up at the airport and had a meagre breakfast before boarding. As Margaret was on an assisted travel card we took advantage of this and got priority boarding with her only after we got called to the boarding gate because we hadn't booked in as we had no luggage to book in. Fay and Margaret sat either side of the aisle and I was left to read in peace on my own.

A restful flight and once again we joined Margaret and got priority to go to the front of the queue at East Midlands border control. It was too good to be true but our desk had a computer problem and by the time this was sorted out we were the last people out of the airport. Judith was waiting for us outside but had lost her credit card so we had to retrace her steps in the rain until Fay found it on the car park road. Back to grey and cold England but at least we had booked our PCR tests and eventually found our way around the airport to the test centre who, guess what, had no record of our booking.

Now Fay had booked this on line at a drive thru centre for £55 but ended up paying £69 because she hadn't used a special code that was hidden in the small print so cancelled it to restart the original booking at £55. This caused the registration to go amiss and so we had to re register but a young lad eventually guided us through the formalities and we got our tests. Judith was sitting patiently outside watching everybody go in and come out until Fay came out on her own.

There was a one way system in place around the test centre and Fay had bypassed this and I eventually arrived having taken the correct roundabout way out. So off we went to be reunited with our family at last ready for Xmas. Judith joined us for a cup of tea when we arrived and caught up with all the gossip. We got our PCR results the next day and we could now be allowed out not that we had taken that into account and has already gone shopping. We were relieved to see that Trevor was a lot better than we had anticipated but obviously still in pain with his leg and his back.

This was Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> December the start of our two weeks holiday. I ventured out into the cold grey winter countryside for my usual walks while the ladies

went over to the butcher Joseph Morris in South Kilworth to buy the steak for Xmas day along with a turkey crown. I walked round town reminiscing trying to see if I recognised anybody. Trevor's bathroom project was still in limbo: the moving toilet seat was interesting as was the automatic light that allowed you only 60 seconds to fulfil your ablution process before plunging you into complete darkness.

On Xmas eve we decided get up early and go to Fosse Park. The car had been in the garage for repair to the DPU (Diesels Purification unit). I don't quite understand why you had to purify the diesel but any way I was designated to drive chancing the lack of insurance and as soon as we got on the M1 the power went and we had to drive very gingerly into the enormous shopping centre. I wanted to go to Marks to get some slipper socks for the duration and Lorraine wanted to go to Next so we parked close to Marks and said our good byes to Lorraine who explained that the park had been extended considerably since we were there last. So Fay, Shaelyn and I went to Marks .

I couldn't remember how big it was and surprised how few people there were but we eventually found what I wanted and then went into the home section to get a bedside table for Shaelyn. They didn't have any but advised us to go to Next telling us to turn right out of Marks and through the food mall and Next would be on our right. So we made our brief way to Next, found our way round there and bought the lamp. We came out, turned left back into the food mall for some breakfast and rang Lorraine surprised that we hadn't seen her in Next. She hadn't arrived there yet. Where the hell she had been nobody knows. So we eventually met up for breakfast and drove back home giving the M1 a miss, greatly relieved that the car was going ok. I reminisced about all the places we passed on the way

back through the countryside. This tickled Shaelyn who couldn't stop laughing telling Trevor about our little adventure and listening to the old folks and their ancient tales.

Dan and family visited us with their three children who were all ushered into the lounge while the grownups talked about old times at Trevant. Lorraine and Fay knocked up some nice canapés and plenty of sweet things for the kids, and me! The mini sausage rolls didn't last very long.

We had a lovely Xmas day watching Shaelyn opening all the presents around the Xmas tree. They had decorated the place beautifully although the lounge was too cold to use, we took advantage of the under floor heating in the extended kitchen. Poor Trevor couldn't do much walking about so was tied to watching the TV which was on all the time with his usual war movies and loud bangs. But we did manage to play Uno Attack in the evenings, or "Uno Attack Grandad" as they called it. Lorraine had her mobile telephone glued to her hand and was hardly aware of what was going on and had to be prompted when it was her go. Then we played Newmarket which totally confused her but she still managed to win!

Paula and Joe came on Tuesday after Christmas and we had a evening of Risk with all the men with Stu joining us to make up the numbers for a long night of sustained battles. Paula and Joe stayed overnight at the Travel Lodge and joined us for breakfast the next morning when Lorraine excelled in her poached eggs making a dozen in one go. Once I had mastered the nuclear cooking range I turned out a mean bubble and squeak. In the next few days Shirley called on us along with Wendy but we rang Irene and Tony and they couldn't risk seeing us as Tony had a nervous syndrome

and felt it best to keep isolated. We needed to have lateral flow tests and I went down town to the chemists and was told to that I had to go to the library for them. Obviously!

Then I had to take Trevor to the hospital in Coventry, Walsgrave. Wow, what an enormous place, just like a small town, so I dropped him off and pottered about in the local shopping mall and returned to pick him up, taking several wrong turns before eventually finding him. He had a successful meeting with the consultant and they turned the rack up on his leg device and he could now do away with the crutches.

As we couldn't go out we celebrated New years Eve at home with Fay making a fish pie and for the next few days prepared for our journey home on Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> January. Margaret had already returned to Spain and told us about the border controls where we could bypass on the passport side and go straight through the European control with our TIE cards. So I drove Lorraine and Shaelyn up to the East Midlands Airport and we made our goodbyes.

Even though we had no hold luggage we booked in at the Ryanair desk and were given the all clear with all our Covid certificates and boarding passes and cleared security, well almost. Fay had some cream to dispose of and then we had a nice breakfast and boarded on time. We alerted Gary and Penny when we landed and made our way to the short stay car park being greeted by Penny as Gary had to drive around to save paying the extra.

We arrived back and Gary came charging over to us and started screaming at Penny. So much for a nice welcome home. But apparently what had happened was they had misjudged the arrival time of our flight which

meant the extra trip around the airport and as they had exceed the 10 minutes allowed which meant they had to pay but Penny had the credit cards so Gary had his ticket gobbled up in the machine. He then had to reverse out of the parking lane causing complete havoc and reverse back into the car park. Penny was ordered to go back inside the airport building to sort everything out and was told how to get out of the car park by pressing a button and paying at the machine.

We eventually made it home at 4 o'clock, had a quick wash and brush up and made it to the Monday night bridge club in Alhaurin Golf Club. We feigned jet lag but still came top with a massive 73% nearly 20% clear of the rest of the pack.

The Spanish celebrate their Xmas on the 6<sup>th</sup> January with the Three Kings parade on the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> so our neighbours were preparing for this and invited us to Mercedes' new home on Friday 7<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile on the Tuesday Fay had to go down to Benalmadena for her spooks get together to do their mysterious meditations etc and I got an e mail inviting us for a bridge with Dave and Sue and friends the next day starting at 10.30 in the morning. This involved bacon and egg butties before play and a lovely time was had by ten of us after Dave had figured out how to organise the movement.

Then the "lunch" at Mercedes' new home which was decorated inside like a musical hall theatre with a microphone set up with a music box like a Karaoke machine. There were drums, tambourines, a guitar and the Ordoñez family ensemble in full voice. There was a mass of Xmas decorations including the usual religious artifacts and a baby Jesus in a manger. There was one long bar covered in food and drink hiding what would eventually be the kitchen. The fireplace had units

either side again swamped with decorations. They had invited their old friend Rodriguez who played the flamenco base box and so we sat down to eat and everyone took it in impromptu turns to sing and dance.

Poor Sophia had damaged the bones in her foot and came in a wheel chair but that didn't stop her standing up and swaying in time to the music along with her sisters in harmony. The music varied from Xmas music to pop classics in both Spanish and English so we could join in now and then. This started at 2 o'clock and we were continually pressed to eat and drink with demands to get us up to sing and dance. We eventually gave in and joined the conga line prancing around the room then singing "YMCA" with the necessary arm movements. I was given a toy trumpet to join in with the band and eventually Pablo translated a message on his phone to say the party was coming to a close. This was at 9 o'clock so we had survived 7 hours of musical entertainment that you would be hard pressed to copy with professional musicians and singers. It was a musical hall night to remember as we crawled home thoroughly enchanted and knackered. The next day I sent the family one of my calligraphic cards with the message "thank you for giving us our annual vaccination for happiness." That about sums up our Xmas for 2021/22.



The Ordoñez family with Maureen back in 2019 and some fat old git in a red coat.

## **Pat & Rita visit march 2022**

(another sort of story)

Once upon a time in the land of the grey skies and King Arthur there lived three beautiful princesses, not to be confused with those from Eastwick or Cawdor and they married three handsome princes who were all involved in the ancient guild of chariot sales. They begat many children and had many parties well known throughout the land where one could feel a right tit but the most famous party was to celebrate the fiftieth birthdays of the two princes when they re-enacted the famous Shakespearean play "The Sound of Music".

The three princesses, Pat, Rita & Fay in the theatre in Fuengirola



Then one prince famous for blowing his own trumpet was beguiled by another fair maiden and the

other prince was famous for his days in the Army and begatting lots of other children died.

The other prince had married a princess from the strange land of Scotland where men wore skirts and hunted wild haggis and where they brewed wonderful whisky and where it rained a lot so they decided to move to the land of the Moores, famous for the five "S's": sun, sea, sand, sangria and something else and there they had a reunion with the other princesses in the land of the sun but a wicked witch had put a spell on the princesses and it rained sand. But they were not down hearted and tried the famous food and wine of the land and went down to the seaside for a nice Italian meal and walked along the sea front watching the stormy seas.

They found a lovely little local breakfast cafe called "Tiffany's" where they could eat for half the price and ancient Chinese bazaars to buy some more clothes to fill their empty wardrobes. The handsome prince made them feel welcome with a blazing fire every night and drove them around so that they could drink and took them down to the coast to a big shopping centre to buy more clothes and then for a surprise to the theatre to see "The Sound of Music" which brought back many happy memories for all the princesses.

They managed to break the wicked spell and sat out in the sun for one day and then went down to San Pedro to where one of the princesses used to holiday with her family and we sat on the sand in a Spanish restaurant and reminisced about the old days.

One of the princesses wanted to confess her sins so we went to a lovely little local church on Sunday and she got some wine and a nibble but they didn't have

time to listen to all her sins so we came back and sat in the dying sun with some more wine.

On the last day they went down to Tiffany's for breakfast again and to the ancient Chinese bazaar for some presents and then drove to ye olde petrol station garage for a traditional Spanish cheap meal and we came back to the log fire, emptied the brandy bottle and watched the TV which made everybody laugh to end the holiday in a happy mode.

## **Bureacracy 2022**

It all really started I suppose when I hit Christian's car. Christian Goss was a German damp proofing engineer who had parked a small bit away from the opposite wall from our garage when visiting our next door neighbour Keld on one of his visits sorting out the problems they were having with the water getting into the house. It wasn't a big dent and as my front bumper was plastic I didn't hear anything until he came running out cursing me in German. I could have rubbed out the scratch on his car with some paint restorer and from experience with Stewart, popped the dent out of my bumper with a hair dryer.

But obviously with the poor chap standing in front of me I had to do the decent thing and offer him my insurance details. Now I had been thinking about such problems with parking and talked to our Spanish neighbours about getting a "Vado Permanente" sign put up on our garage to stop people parking opposite us as their daughter Mercedes worked in the town hall where you have to go to get one of these signs. Pablo got a form for me to fill out and helped me fill in parts of the form in Spanish.

Meanwhile poor Christian was having problems with water coming from Keld's other neighbour. They were Belgiums who were always at each other's throats arguing but nowhere to be found at the moment and so Keld had written a letter to the town hall asking for their contact details to allow entrance to their property to inspect the water problem. We had asked Pablo if they knew who the Belgiums were and suspected they had probably killed each other and the bodies were probably still lying in the house. So Keld sent us the

letter electronically and asked us to “pop” it into the Padron department of the town hall. I parked up awaiting Fay as she “popped” the letter into the town hall.

Half an hour later she returned with a tale of the usual Spanish bureaucracy. She joined the queue at the reception desk and eventually gave the letter to the receptionist who told her she was in the wrong town hall. Fay persisted and asked her to read the letter to confirm the *Oficina de Informacion Castral* was in the correct town hall . She was in the correct town hall after all but then was requested a signature and an NIE number. Fay explained that the person who wrote the letter was in Denmark and she would have to call him. This meant losing her place in the queue and returned after contacting Keld.

She then wrote the NIE number on the letter and signed it on behalf of Keld. The receptionist then requested to see the NIE document on her phone. So Fay had to leave the queue to phone Keld who sent her his copy to Fay’s phone. She rejoined the queue and the NIE document was printed from the computer which meant it was on file all the time.

She then asked to see his passport. Fay blew her top and in raving Spanglish confronted the receptionist who then printed out the copy of the passport. To do this she must have had all the documents on file as well. Fay was livid but maintained her composure and eventually got a document acknowledging receipt of Keld’s letter.

So now it was my turn to face the full fury of Spanish bureaucracy and being forewarned was ready to be forearmed. I filled the form Pablo had given me with the details he had given me. I then asked one of

our bridge friends Annie who spoke the lingo to help and together we managed to fill in the rest of the form requesting a "Vado Permanente". Annie suggested we did a map of the garage and road and gave us a list of other forms we thought may be required. So Fay dug out the Escritura, the Empadronamiento form, the I.B.I form, the original NIE form and TIE cards and copies of our passports as Fay was part owner of the house we thought it best to have all her details as well.

Together the three musketeers marched into the town hall and joined the queue, this time having the choice of two receptionists and were lucky enough to get the young man in preference of the "Bitch". We gave him the application form and he asked for our TIE cards. So far so good. Then the IBI form. He photo copied all the forms and then asked how long the yellow line was and I replied three metres. Much paper shuffling and copying and the traditional showing of his holiday photos to his mate at the back and he printed out the acknowledgement form and we were on our way. Phew! We couldn't believe our luck. In and out in under ten minutes.

As in all fairy stories everybody ended up living happily ever after. Christian Goss the German water man became friends with us as we had a leak and he came and fixed it and also repaired our roof rendering it ready for the solar panels to be installed. He still hasn't had his car doors repaired though.

Now everybody didn't end up living happily as the saga about Keld's water leaking neighbour carries on and we have to take Keld up to the town hall on one of his brief visits and in the middle of May. The same procedure: I drop Keld and Fay off at the top town hall and find a parking space until they have finished and this time it was a brief visit but they had been given

another name to visit in the other town hall. Coin has two town halls to fit all the bureaucracy in.

Unfortunately Keld and Lone had to return to Denmark so it was left up to Fay and I and we proceeded the following week to call on a Juan Osario. We had met Juan before, he was in the *catastral*, or property department and was quite helpful. You have to have an appointment to see anybody but nobody answers the bloody phone so we just barged in and with the help of a charming young lady security guard managed to find the correct office eventually and found our man. He was busy so we called again the next day at 9.30 and joined the queue. We waved the paperwork at him and Fay managed to contact Martin to talk to him explaining the situation. We needed to go back to the other office to see a man who had the information we required. Back to whence we came from and put our case to a gentleman who needed to see some form of identification and would not accept out laminated TIE cards.

Fay had a dentist's appointment that morning so I left her at the town hall with a coffee and returned home to get the original documentation. I duly returned and back we went armed with the necessary card and he did his paper shuffling bit and eventually printed out a document which we thought had the name and address of the mysterious neighbour.

Wrong! It had Fay's name on there and we had to return to the mysterious Juan Osario and waited in the queue again. It transpired that the information we were after was still not available, not only didn't they have the information we were after but that they had found out that our name was not on our property but some mysterious person we'd never heard of. I tried to explain that we weren't interested in our property but

the property the other side of our neighbour's. Another brick wall. We couldn't proceed until this was cleared up so we went home totally frustrated and ready for another day's battle.

It's now the 31st May and we make our weary way back to our beloved town hall for another visit with our friend Juan Osario in the cadastral department armed with our escritura, our original TIE cards, passports , clean underwear etc. We wait in the queue once more and get invited in eventually and Juan knows us by now and looks at the escritura and opens up his relevant files with nice pictures on the screen. He looks bemused. Oh shit, not more problems.

He calls my name in full and I nod respectfully. He shakes his head and in English explains that the property *is* in my name after all. He doesn't understand what his colleague in the other office has done but then realises that there was only room in the document layout for one name and it wasn't Fay's. Had I given him my TIE card yesterday it would have been different. So Juan bites his knuckle and shakes his head and off we walk back to see his pal in the other office. He explains the situation and Happy Harry, I can't think of any other name for him, opens the relevant files and prints out two documents showing the layout of our two plots. We thank him but try to explain that all we want is the details of our friend's neighbours. H.H. just waves his hands back and forth and says "finito" which clearly indicates the end of the interview.

We have hit a bureaucratic brick wall. They're good these boys, you have to give them that. Real professional bureaucrats, the best!

## **Holidays.2022/2023**

Now what constitutes a good holiday? The sun is obviously important especially when we lived in the UK. Then access to lots of decent restaurants. A decent swimming pool to relax and lie in the sun. Cheap booze and fags. (we don't do the fags bit any more) Tranquillity, away from those other noisy tourists and some interesting places to visit and some good company. Well, we now had all that, so why did we need to look elsewhere?

Antony came up with the answer. He and Lisa were doing a leisurely drive down from Barcelona, stopping off in interesting places that Lisa knew about and they were ending up in Almeria in the Cabo de Gata National Park, not a million miles away from us, well about 300 kilometres actually so we decided to meet up there and they booked us into a small complex of bungalows in a village called Rodalquilar so we set off on a three hour drive. As soon as we were past Malaga we saw polytunnel farms growing vegetables for mile after mile as far as the eye could see to the horizon, an amazing sight. They were farmed mostly by the Moroccans as we found out when we turned off just past Almeria for a coffee.

We made contact with Antony and he guided us to San Jose for a meet up and a lunch on the coast. We had a pleasant lunch and made our way to the complex. There were a number of semidetached self catering bungalows around a swimming pool which we all utilised as soon as we had unpacked and then headed off for a meal in the evening. The village was an old gold mining town that was being slowly rebuilt around a main street with lots of lovely character low rise shops and restaurants. It was very picturesque and quiet until the evening when the families came out for their

promenade. Most of the restaurants were booked but we managed to find a lovely Italian style place with a roof top terrace and a view over the village and the setting sun. Very romantic.

The next morning we found the village shop which was small but seemed to have most of what we wanted and then we found the village breakfast cafe for a basic meal. Then off to the beach and Antony and I did some snorkelling until I bumped into a stinging jelly fish. Fortunately there was a lady on the beach who worked in a chemist and gave me some cream to reduce the pain until we found a local chemist for further antibiotic cream. We found another beach cafe for lunch and returned to our bungalows for a siesta and then off down to the coast again for a rooftop meal in what was mainly a hippy village. It was a wonderful few days off in beautiful scenery with Antony and Lisa but we didn't stay for a trip inland to the cowboy park where they filmed all the Spaghetti Westerns.



Father and son snorkelling of the coast of Almeria.

## **80<sup>th</sup> Birthday party**

One of the problems I had when designing the top patio was that to introduce shade was relative to the price of roofing so we had to keep any covered area to the minimum. We had to have a covered kitchen and then some for dining but it had to be limited to cover for about twelve to fourteen people. Once finished and the top patio had its first big party, my 60<sup>th</sup>, it became clear that much as people loved the sun they needed shade to eat and drink and also to play bridge.

So we had enough shade for a dining table for about a dozen but only enough for two bridge tables and so to have any more tables they would have to be down three levels in the house or in the front patio. This is all well and good if you are a young buck and can leap up and down steps all day long but when it involves the more mature bridge player, some of whom could hardly walk, then this was going to be a problem.

Now all our other bridge playing friends had no problem with this and could accommodate at least three or sometimes four tables which meant entertaining twelve to sixteen people: Gary and Penny although only a small bungalow could get at least three tables under their garden awning; Maureen and Jeremy along with Jan had lovely big apartments in Alhaurin Golf with big conservatories with room for at least three tables; Anne and Tom had a choice of a large dining room and lounge or down a few steps to a lovely roomy poolside shaded barbecue area; Steve and Jenny had inside room and a shaded patio on the same level; Tony and Winna a large patio and the option of a large lounge inside as well; Charles and Mariapaz had plenty of room in and out and the same applied to lots of other friends.

This meant we had to adjust the placing of bridge tables and also work out some extra shade for any large parties such as our Golden wedding party which involved moving the table once the sun had lowered to accumulate more than twelve people. My 80<sup>th</sup> birthday was coming up soon and the Ordoñez family got wind of this and with the help of Janne decided to enhance the surroundings as usual so we got the drum kit up and got the family over from the UK and down from Barcelona. One of the problems we found as with the wedding anniversary was that because we had so many bridge friends that if we invited one we would have to invite the lot so we had to keep it down to family and local friends.



The birthday boy, ready to party.  
Antony on the drums.



Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers?



I think I've died and gone to heaven! Now I have to tell a story about this picture as I use it as my wall paper on my phone. On my morning walks up to the shopping centre La troche I lost my phone and whoever found it saw the pic of the Ordoñez family and knew Sofia and contacted her and it was safely returned to me that evening via Pablo.



Sunset at the party



The birthday cake.

## **Christmas 2022**

Let's go to The UK for Christmas with the family we said not fully understanding the logistical implications. We found an airport car park offer for one euro a day which added up to 83 Euros for 10 days. Is Spanish Maths different from English Maths? So we looked around for some volunteers and persuaded Annie to volunteer to take us to the airport and pick us up little realizing that she would be close to death when we returned but she braved the odds. Bless her! We found some relatively cheap flights and discovered our old friend Margaret from Estepona was travelling back on the same day so with spare seats available her and Fay were able to catch up on the old times leaving me a peaceful journey back to freezing UK.

One of our bridge playing friends in Spain was Sue Rhodes. She used to run cookery courses for the U3A and it was her who put my name forward for the bridge class. She lived in a beautiful house and gardens with two lovely husky dogs. She had a son Giles who we met. He was ex army and working in the security business and his lovely partner Sue was a manager in Morrisons. She was a few years older than him but looked a few years younger than him. They lived in Coventry and we met up with them several times, usually at the Indian restaurant in Lutterworth. I hit it off with him immediately as we both had the same sense of humour he got on well with Trevor. His mother unfortunately lost the plot with age and got thrown out of the bridge club and she also cut off communications with Giles. We however kept in touch and this Xmas had them over at Trevor's place.

We kept up with Irene and Tony Harper my old golf business partner and Shirley. Ian and Delia came

up to see us and dragged us out screaming for lunch in Orangerie in Kilworth House. Poor Joe had vertigo and so him and Paula couldn't make it up to see us.

Ten days later at four o'clock in the morning our son drove us back to East Midlands Airport and after a fine breakfast of Eggs Benedictine we escaped from the arctic conditions and were duly picked up by Annie on a bright sunny day at Malaga Airport and returned home only to find the car wouldn't start. A quick phone call to Els managed to drag her man John away from his gardening duties to come and give us a jump lead start to get the engine going. However upon his departure the engine refused to restart so poor John got called back, this time with a battery charger. So we connected the charger and sat back and cleaned our selves up in time for the Alhaurin Bridge Club event.

All dressed up for bridge, the bloody car refused to restart again. So poor John got called out again for a jump start to get us on our way. Fortunately we were ahead of schedule with time to spare but upon arrived at Alhaurin Golf Club the car refused to restart again . General enquiries managed to find another volunteer who had some jump leads and Jeremy got dragged out to the car park to try out another jump start but to no avail. So we had to carry on with the night's bridge contest under enormous pressure wondering how the hell we would manage to get home. I felt that I would be able to get our local garage to come and get the car with jump leads the next day so we could return home leaving the car in the Golf Cub car park overnight.

Feeling quite relieved we proceeded with the bridge and Jan gave us a lift to the BP garage at Alhaurin Golf meeting up with Lea for our traditional supper of Patatas Bravas and Polo Crujiente with Aioli. As of normal we had a good old blether replaying our

bridge hands and Jan drove us home. We both slept like logs and I walked down to the garage the next morning who informed me that I would have to call out the insurance Grua and meet at the car to bring it back to them as they didn't have a spare car at the time.

Now Jan had a New Year's resolution to do a good deed every day so I called he up and gave her the option of meeting her resolution's target by coming and picking me up to drive me back to the Golf Club to meet up with the Grua. I rang the Insurance people who were very helpful and we agreed to meet the Grua in one hour to give Jan time to do her make up and come and collect me.

The Grua rang me in Spanish and I managed to ascertain that he wanted the name of the street where I was. I got put through to an English speaking lady and eventually managed to explain that I wasn't in the urbanisation but at the Golf Club House being careful of my annunciation of "club" which could have misleading implications of the Grua looking for a brothel. Anyway he found me, started the car with a battery pack and I drove to my garage in Coin, deposited the car with them to install a new battery and eventually returned home to the awaiting arms of my beloved and we drove off into the sun and Aldis.

A big thank you to all involved in our Christmas holiday.

## **The parking fine.**

Having won the annual Alhaurin el Grande bridge club tournament for the 12<sup>th</sup> time we felt we should really spread our wings and go somewhere where the standard of play was higher so we made our way down to Fuengirola to play in the Ace Club, run by the Danes. We had played them once before about ten years ago but found them a bit snobbish and bad mannered even the tournament director apologised for their manners. Anyway this time we were made welcome and enjoyed the company even though we rarely managed to get off the bottom of the table.

A previous Monday at Alhaurin we came top again with 71% and so we decided to see if our form would continue with the big boys and went down to the Ace club the next day. We found a parking spot and tried to pay but the machine refused to accept any money or even allow us to enter any data such as our car registration number. It was free from 2 o'clock to 5 so we thought the machine must have closed down for that period.

We went to the bridge club and the Danish boss there told us it was free but we had our doubts so at half past five I was sent out in the pouring rain to put some money into the parking meter but once again it refused to operate. We finished the bridge and came bottom for the first 12 rounds managing to jump up to 9<sup>th</sup> position at the last table. Nothing like a bit of humility. I had the forethought to grab an umbrella so we made a dash for it back to the car but it was really chucking it down and when we got to the car found a parking ticket on the windscreen. We were well pissed off as well as well drowned but made it home and dried out.

The next day we started to ask how we could pay the fine or at least argue the toss over a parking meter that refused to work for us. The reply from the Town Hall was that we had to go back to Fuengirola and pay there which was a pain in the arse so made other enquiries and asked the local Guru, a Glaswegian lady who spoke fluent Spanish (her husband and I both did our RAF training at the Locking. He ended up as a Group Captain in Las Vegas would you believe. I ended up as a Sergeant in Leighton Buzzard.) She assured us we could pay in the post office in Coin. I made my way there and in my Spanglish started the investigation and was informed that I had to pay in the local Town Hall. Muttering to myself feeling another adventure coming on I marched down to the Town Hall. After more deliberation I was informed that I should go the other Town Hall. Deep Joy! The usual Spanish shoulder shrugging ensued at the bottom Town Hall and after managing to find someone of importance was politely told that I had to pay in the Fuengirola Town Hall.

We had 72 hours to go to obtain a cancellation (a reduction in the fine) and then the car started playing up with a knocking noise coming from the back somewhere. So I went down and talked to Christina, the lady with the large eyes and she told me to bring the car back tomorrow morning so that she could look at it. It was another early start for me then as I managed to get to the garage by 9 O'clock, but sod's law the banging had stopped! I had to drive Christina around until eventually the noise returned. At least I got some enjoyment driving a lovely lady around in my car and she said that I would have to wait until she had talked to her Dad Miguel to try and find out what the problem was and would let me know when I could get an appointment.

The 72 hours was creeping up on us and I was worried about taking the car all the way to Fuengirola and back but we decided to have a go and if it broke down we at least we could call out the Grua who would drive us back to the garage. So off we went, with the knocking noise and made our way to the Town Hall in Fuengirola. Fortunately there was a underground car parking next to the town hall and we made our way to the reception, this was just a man walking about picking people up at random to help them. He told us that we could go to a company who would cancel (a reduction of €6.50 in lieu of the €60 fine) which was just down the road about ten minutes walk opposite the bus station but they closed at half past one. It was now one o'clock.

I set off on my own but could see no sign of this company called Dornier. Fay eventually arrived out of puff and we asked a couple standing in the foyer where Dornier was but they couldn't help us. Eventually the word "parking fine" came out and their eyes lit up and they showed us a list of companies further down the corridor and pointed out our destination on the second floor. Breathlessly we managed to get there and paid our €6.50 and a very helpful English lady showed us how to operate the parking meter which they had in their office. What we should have done was to press the *number 1* to get the machine to start up and then press a little flag to get it into English and then enter our car registration number etc, etc. It's easy when you know how but of course there are no instructions on the meter so that they can get more money out of you. But if you know where the Dornier office is you can bypass the town hall to "cancel" your fine!

She then showed us the "app" we could use for parking. I had already started downloading the *ap* on my phone at the original parking place three days ago but she now talked us through the instructions as how

to pay and explained how to overcome the gap in the parking times. She was extremely helpful telling us the app could be used in any “Blue” parking place as well as in Benalmadena and Malaga but unfortunately none in Coin.

We fell out of Dornier greatly relieved having paid the “fine” and so fortunate as to find someone so helpful. We passed a coffee and cake shop that dragged us in for a gooey, creamy cake and a decent coffee and breathed a sigh of relief in having once more beaten bureaucracy. And the car made it home ok ready to get back into the arms of Christina on Monday!

## **The Opera, Danish and Norwegian bridge clubs.**

One of the things I want to do before I go is to become sophisticated, you know, like getting out of the bath to go for a pee. So I went to the opera, well, I went to the local cinema to see the streaming of the Barber of Seville from the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. You get the best seats in the house saving a couple of hundred quid and can see right up the noses of the performers. It was sung in Italian with Spanish sub titles 'cos that's where we live.

It was very entertaining and I'm now looking it up on the internet to see what it was all about but the sets of these modern performances are all *avant garde*, which means minimalistic. It was set in Seville obviously but it could have been in Milton Keynes. They couldn't have spent more than a couple of hundred quid on the set which to me detracts from the performance. OK, the performers were all top of their trade and you could have heard them in Milton Keynes and the outfits were colourful but the scene was in an empty room or outside with one tree.

The last time we went it was Carmen set in Seville again and the only scenery was a set of grey steps. The excuse they use is that the scenery detracts from the music and singing. Bollocks, it enhances the atmosphere. We wanted to go to see Aida but after seeing the trailer, there wasn't a pyramid or a pharaoh in sight, it was just a load of modern soldiers.

On my next journey towards sophistication I went to our local cinema in Coin for the live streaming of Wagner's Ring cycle opera Rheingold and was overjoyed

to read the Mail On Line's critique the next day which completely agreed with my Grand Opera to Bland Opera thinking.

I quote: "the grandiose finale resembled Strictly Come Dancing"; "the wig department was on vacation" and "the molten gold resembled a cross between vomit and school custard". The "one of the giants looked like a football manager and they might have at least put lifts in their shoes". The naked emaciated ninety year old representing the Earth Goddess Erda would never had made page three of the sun. Age Concern maybe.

The other problem being nobody told me there wasn't an interval, so after two hours I was getting extremely peckish not having eaten since lunch but with the forethought of having Fay's egg sandwiches with me. Unfortunately she had them wrapped up like a casket of enriched uranium and I had to fumble about out in the dark to go through several layers of plastic, silver foil and cling film to get at them. Of course it was all in German with Spanish sub titles but at least I had swotted up the right opera this time and had a brief idea what Wotan and Alberich were up to.

I didn't want to be sophisticated anyway!

2023 and bridge was dominating our lives, not tyrannically but pleasurably. Monday was our ABC (Alhaurin Bridge Club) night at the Alhaurin Golf Club house. This was run by Jeremy and Maureen who started the club way back in Sol Andalus days of TAPAS down in Alhaurin de la Torre. We had seen many different locations for this club but it had prospered long before we arrived on the scene. It was relatively well regulated but Jeremy refused to be called a tournament director more a board handler and we very rarely had any disputes.

The only one I can remember was with Sue Rhodes who became very aggressive and rude and Jeremy had to write to her asking her to leave, she also got kicked out of the El Puente Club in the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole in Fuengirola. It was a great shame and we became great friends with her son Giles and his partner Sue who lived in Coventry and whom we kept in contact with whenever we returned to the UK. She even rejected him barring him on her phone. But Monday was always very friendly if a bit on the slow side but it was a good launching site for us as we were more or less the top players there winning the annual awards most years.



**ALHAURÍN DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB**

**ANNUAL CHAMPION PAIRS**

*Fay and Paddy O'Farrell – 2014, 2015, 2017(tied), 2019, 2021, 2022*

Then on Tuesdays we now had started a little school for Eric whom we had met at Jan Constable's house on the day her husband Mike died. We didn't know he had died but were aware he was near death and called to see Jan and walked into the house as the same time as the funeral directors. Eric was a gay German, quite a character who had helped to look after both Jan and Mike. We also met Els, a Belgium lady who I had met on my Thursday U3A days. We got talking and eventually started giving Eric bridge lessons and Els

joined in to make up a foursome with Jan. It helped Jan to keep in touch socially but she was never going to be a good bridge player. Eric was deadly keen having a Grandmother who was a good bridge player and we set up this little group every Tuesday rotating the venue between our different homes.

Eric's house was, I don't know how to describe it, more like a Hansel and Gretel house in the forest. It was wedged between two buildings and a public way through to his back garden. It was basically a two room house but the garden was magical with steps up to a large patio overlooking the town which he had built into a Buddhist retreat. He was a most intriguing man who seemed to be knowledgeable on nearly all subjects and he was a good hairdresser as well. He was also incredibly generous with his time and helpful and helped us in our garden with his jet washer after the rains from the Sahara desert which had covered everything with a fine layer of brown sand.

Els' house was a complete contrast. She was a horsey type who had stables and horses and loved the Versace fashion. She had beautiful china and silver tea sets and silver cutlery, Versace curtains and cushions everywhere and old family photographs in stylish frames. She was living the other side of Coin, across what they called the "Toblerone" bridge out towards our Danish neighbour Benny's Gusman nursery. She moved on closer to Coin in the end of 2022, still with her horses and Versace curtains et al.

Eric partnered Els and they joined the Wednesday group which was started up by a German lady in the Porton de la Piedra, a pizza venta the other side of Cártama. It had evolved from a club run by David McCleery at the Venta Los Moreno. We bypassed that to go to the El Puente club in Fuengirola where there were

at least 10 tables and the standard was a lot higher. Before that we went to a nice little restaurant in El Coton part of Fuengirola run by Russell and Georgina. He was a brilliant pastry chef who made great sausage rolls amongst other pastries.

Russell and Georgina had invested in the same portfolio as ours which had been introduced to us by our financial agent, Emma Cox. Unfortunately after the Covid epidemic the people who ran the El Puente club either returned to the UK or were too ill to run the club so we joined Eric and Els at the Porton de la Piedra. It was a bit lackadaisical but ideal for beginners and the pizzas were to die for. It was run by Jo, a lady from Northern Ireland who had such a broad Irish accent and spoke so fast I couldn't understand her but she was incredibly hard working and always laughing and joking but the place was a bit run down, it was a doss house for workers, a lot of whom were British and the toilets were very basic and the drains would stink on a bad day.

So we decided to try the clubs in Fuengirola and went to Chrispa, a Norwegian club next to the market square that had a computerised system and we bumped into a few old friends from El Puente club, the 19th Hole. The standard was a lot higher than Alhaurin but we managed to play well enough to get some decent scores. Then we decided to go back to the Ace Club, a Danish club the other side of Fuengirola. We had tried it many years ago but were disgusted with the cold welcome we got and the bad manners of some of the players. Even the tournament director apologised to us at the end of the session but that was a long time ago and some of the Alhaurin players had tried it and enjoyed the bridge.

So we went there on Tuesdays or Saturdays and found the standard a lot higher again but we could hold our heads up high with some good scores sometimes. Some bad scores as well but this week we played against a couple, actually a family with a 9 year old who also played who were from Sweden and part of the Swedish International team. The team had visited the club the previous week and because of the cheap drinks there all got very drunk. I don't think this family were involved and we found them very good company but managed to get three top boards off them. They did end up top of the pack eventually and we managed a healthy 51% at 5<sup>th</sup> place out of 9 which was an improvement on previous week's performances. They had 14 tables there the last time we played there. It was a busy club owned by club members but the parking was a nightmare.

Then we came across another club in Calahonda which was quicker to get to than those in Fuengirola, the Club Naranja, run by Brian and his wife Val, it was used by all the local Free Mason's Lodges with full catering facilities. Brian and Val had taken it over after the last users ran off with all the money and they had turned it into a profitable set up with nice furniture. We donated some plastic side tables left over from the ABC and had to order some more for them from our local Chinese bazaar.

So that's Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday accounted for. Thursdays were my U3A Bridge Class days. This had started at least ten years ago when we joined the U3A (University of the Third Age) which had activities around Marbella and Alhaurin such as painting, walking, book clubs, lectures, cooking etc etc. Fay went for the cooking classes run by Sue Rhodes and they were looking for someone to start up a bridge class and Sue recommended me so as keen as mustard I got

a whiteboard, crayons, and all the bridge paraphernalia, boards, bidding boxes etc and found a small venta to host my class.

One of the ideas behind the class was to progress the students to move up to the ABC bridge club. It was purely a class with no movements and only half a dozen boards for the two hours allocated to get beginners up and running. I set up a 20 page introduction brochure which I eventually turned into a book and published it on line at [obooko.com](http://obooko.com).

This set the ball rolling and every year I went to the enrolment venue and promoted my class to other U3A members. They had to pay 20 € to join and 10 € per annum thereafter. This entitled the members to attend any other U3A activities free. We soon established a base of regular members, most of them came for the social benefits. They would have breakfast there and some would stay on for wine and a tapas lunch.

The first venue was Mad Miguel's Albaquerras venta on the Alhaurin road out of Coin but it soon out grew its potential and we moved to the Mirramonte venta. This was run by Pepe and his son and daughter, Manuel and Monica. They were a lovely family who really made the most out of the venue by having big barbecue events outside on the summer. Monica went to Salsa lessons and brought her class to the restaurant and set up a little demonstration on a small stage set up outside the front. We took Trevor, Lorraine and Shaelyn there and two year old Shaelyn stole the show on the stage set on a balmy moonlit summer's night.

They organised a Mike Sterling concert there. He had starred in the Phantom of the Opera and other London musicals. The back garden was filled with about

a hundred customers and all for 12 Euros. It was a great night out one of many to follow and Pepe was well known for his steaks which were well suited for Trevor who ordered a second helping of rib eye steak and even Shaelyn later on at the age of eight amazed the staff by managing a full rib eye steak on her own.

The bridge class stayed at the Miralmonte for several years until Pepe sold it to Robert. He was a bit of a plonker if I was to be honest. He had a ponytail and owned several Rolls Royces and Bentleys and made a right pigs ear of altering the place and had to shut down due to planning permission problems so the U3A bridge class moved to Pepe's new place opposite La Trocha commercial Centre. Once again Manuel and Monica looked after us while Pepe carried on in the kitchen serving up his famous steaks. Every Christmas the class had a Xmas lunch at Pepe's and I was given a present in the form of a decent bottle of malt Whiskey, some times with the customs security tag still on! I was also given a Carrefour Voucher and we bought coffee machine for home which we used until it broke down.

This year 2023 I was given a bottle of Duc de Alba Orro brandy which I found out cost 134€. Back in 2019 Pepe closed down and our next move was to the venta opposite Mercadona. We had our Christmas lunch there which was a disaster. The couple of gays who had the place when we first moved in ran off without paying their bills and left it up to the landlady to run it and she obviously had no experience of mass cooking. So we then moved to Leslie's bar in Sierra Gordo. It was ok in the summer sitting outside in the terrace but we couldn't move inside because the Age Concern club had the use of that so we looked around and tried Los Arcos run by the ebullient Eva. She normally closed on Thursday but I charmed her into opening especially for us.

Thursday was all consuming as I had to set up the cards so that the hands were interesting and thought provoking, then after the class, do the scoring and write a little synopsis of each hand and try to encourage any new players and throw a little humour into the results. I also had to battle with Allan Edwards, the president of the U3A to authorise my expenses. He always paid up but had to have the last word. He did a lot of hard work for the U3A though and I always managed to wind him up about the rugby, him being a Welshman.

So this left Friday as our day off and on Saturdays we used to go down to the coast and play with friends or have them up here for a barbecue or eat at Mumtaz Mahal, our favourite Indian restaurant. Sometimes we would play at Eva Schlockerman's beautiful house in Los Condes. I think that was the name of the hamlet, half way between Alhaurin and Mijas with views to die for overlooking the coast. Eva had married a pilot in Lufthansa who was also a aeronautical engineer. They were Austrian and their house was filled with some beautiful paintings, some originals and a lot of historical horse prints. They had an enormous reception area as you arrived and a terrace overlooking the coast where we would play bridge. He died long before we knew her so she had to sell the house which was on the market for one and a half million. It took her a long time to sell and she had moved into the butler's house with her lovely little dog

We played in lots of other houses, some on the coast some inland but always beautiful homes and always involved an evening meal at a local restaurant or in somebody's house. This was the beauty of bridge and we made so many good friends through bridge.

Unfortunately Covid put a stop to that and everybody either returned to the UK or we broke up and went our different ways. So Saturdays were now usually a visit to the Ace Bridge Club or watch rugby.



A pleasant afternoon with some bridge friends  
at our top pool patio

## **Easter 2023. Twerking**

The happenings at this Easter were the culmination of a number of events throughout the past years. Our Danish neighbour Janne had her flower shop at the Danish Centre in Fuengirola where we helped out every Xmas selling Xmas trees. The centre was run by Lars and Annueta who we met at one of Janne's parties one winter at the previous boyfriend's house. This was a couple of years ago and he was very interesting having been a Le Mans 24 hour driver. The following spring we met a family from Aberdeen at another of Janne's parties at the same boyfriend's house, Christian was Danish and a consultant in the oil industry based in Aberdeen. His wife was English and they had two young teenaged children, Amara, a daughter who I kept calling Amarillo and a son called Milo. Milo was a bit of a character and tried to teach me how to do the current dance craze of "Twerking". This was a bit like doing the Twist but without moving your feet. Anyway I gave it my best shot and it caused considerable hilarity and they recorded it and apparently it ended up on U Tube.

Janne ditched Carl Eric and now had a new German boy friend Dieter and they hit it off and she now lives with him in his spacious house in Elveria. He is a petrolhead having retired from a successful logistics transport company in Germany with big European customers such as Airbus. He had a number of cars: several Mercedes; a Dodge Viper; a customised Model Ford T; and several motorbikes of which he keeps three gleaming Harley Davidsons in his lounge, like you do only his lounge is bigger than our lounge, kitchen and three bedrooms put together.

So, this Easter Janne has another party at Dieter's place and invites 23 guests and we meet Annueta and her friend Susan, Annueta's husband Lars died two weeks ago of a massive heart attack and Susan who used to run the Danish Centre came with her and we ended up on the same table. Then along comes Christian and family and we start recounting our Twerking experiences, Milo demanding that I give everybody a demonstration of the Twerk but unfortunately or luckily, my knee was playing up which meant Fay had to drive which meant I was allowed to drink and I started getting into Giggle mode and the whole of our table followed suit.

The afternoon dragged on to night and we all ended up round an open log fire on Dieter's patio with some of Dieter's biker friends and Sebastian and his friend Tim joining in helping out with the drinks and the tons of food. We reckoned it would need another 23 guests the next day to finish it all off. I didn't really have the chance to get to know the other bikers who were German as well but everybody had a good time and eventually Fay and I gave up and drove back home. As usual Janne's exuberance was thrown into the equation to make the party unforgettable.

That was on the Thursday. We had been out on the Monday night to our bridge club in Alhaurin which meant a visit to the BP Garage for a meal and a drink. Then on Tuesday we had to go out for another meal at our Belgium friend Els's house for bridge and the on the Wednesday another bridge club meeting which involved my favourite Diablo Pizza at the Piedra de Porton Venta and of course as Fay was driving I could have a few drinks as well.

Now it was Easter Friday and our lovely Spanish neighbours invited us to their house in the town next to

the Church to view the procession from their "Royal" balcony. The Spanish really do make the most of all these religious festivals and put on a good show. Some of those in the procession looked like the Klu Klux Klan in the maroon peaked hats but we were informed by Pablo that they were part of the Nazarene Brethren, an ancient charity to help the poor.

Fay's friend Midi who helped Fay through her cancer treatment with her holistic healing process had a son Jo. They had moved from Perrianna back to Scotland but Jo had come back specially to play in the Perrianna band at the Coin Easter parade and we saw him in the procession but as he was in full blow mode on his Euphonium didn't have the chance to make ourselves known. Pablo and Antonia had put on a huge buffet and their daughters had all gone up to see Christina at Jerez so it was just the four of us to be joined later by their two Moroccan kids who they had befriended. The procession went on through the night to get all the Virgin Marys back into the church as we said our goodbyes to Pablo in the church square.

It was now Saturday and we had to visit Jan. Jan with Lea and ourselves were part of the "Famous Foursome" who met every Monday night at the BP garage after bridge for *Patatas Bravas* and *Pollo Cruiente* and of course some wine. Jan had just had a hip operation which had some complications and was now in rehab in Sol Andaluz. She had asked us to look after her car, an automatic Mercedes which was ideal for me as my left knee was unserviceable and I could manage an automatic. This meant that Fay could drink which suited her down to the ground.

We had arranged to take Jan out for a meal as a try out for when we took her down to Malaga for a scan. She wasn't allowed to put any weight on her left leg so

we had to be careful getting her from her room to the car but we managed it quite well and went off to the El Conde Restaurant for a lunch. This was a lovely restaurant recently refurbished on the hill road to Mijas with some stunning views overlooking the whole coast. It was well known for its barbeques so off we set and managed to get Jan safely into the restaurant and had a lovely meal.

We sat enjoying our meal overlooking the peaceful vista of the Costa del Sol when all of a sudden we were rudely interrupted by the sound of roaring motor bike engines. The noisy bastards! And of course the noisy bastards were Janne and Dieter and his German biker friends on their Harley Davidsons. I don't know who were the most surprised us or them but we all had a good laugh and I complained bitterly about our peaceful lunch being interrupted by a gang of Hell's Angels!

A lovely end to a religious festival.

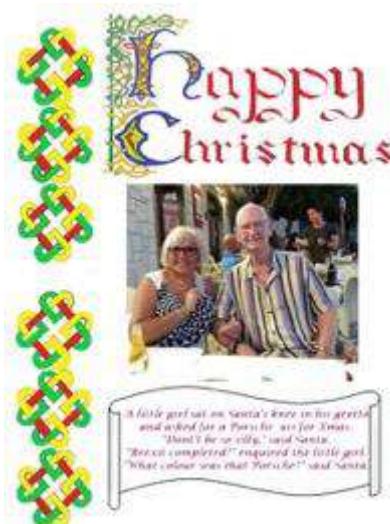
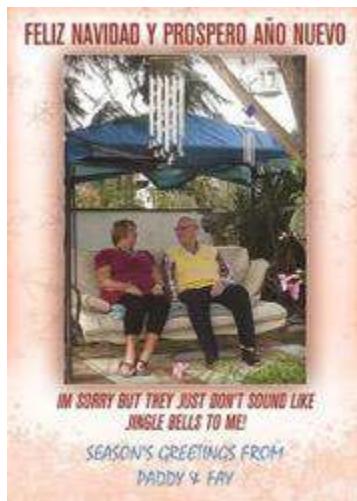
## **Christmas cards**

Every year I send out Xmas cards to my friends and feel that is the only time that I am able to make contact with old friends that I may never see again so I make a special effort to let them know that I am still thinking of them and feel I must keep up some sort of individual relationship. To that end I design and print handmade cards each year giving an up to date picture of Fay and I together with all our contact details just in case they want to make contact with us.

In this modern technological era it is so easy just to press a few buttons on a lap top to send out an impersonal message. OK, so these electronic messages can be beautifully designed but done by a machine so I feel strongly that I should make a personal statement to close friends. So every year I draw out a graphic using some of my calligraphic talents and try to inject a bit of humour on the back page and go up to the One Stop shop in La Trocha to get Jake to print them for me.

I put the cards into the envelopes and print out my mail merge list of addresses to stick on the envelopes. I then have to find a volunteer to take them back to the UK and post them. This saves a lot of time and money bypassing the Spanish postal system. We used to go down to Gibraltar and spend an hour in the post office there to stick the stamps on and post them. However we have found a reliable UK volunteer, Fay's cousin Anne who takes them back to the UK for us on the return from one of her visits to her apartment in La Cala and using the slave labour of her granddaughter Erin sticks all the stamps on and posts them for us in Scotland.

So here are a few samples of original individual Christmas Cards that some people would consider collectable items. Of course there are also the birthday cards, the thank you cards etc all individually custom made to show my appreciation to whom I would describe as good friends!



"I think Manuel's gone a bit over the top just for a couple of tiles for the front gate!"

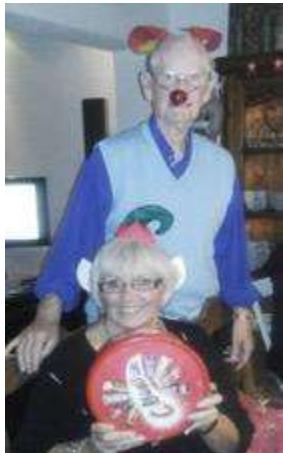


**Feliz Navidad y un  
Próspero año nuevo**



**"When did you say the  
Stannah Stairlift man  
was coming ?"**

**Ho, .. Ho...Bloody Ho!**



**"Sod the bloody diet!"**



## **King Charles' Coronation, 6th May 2023**

It all really started when I hit the side of the garage in Jan's Mercedes. She had just had her hip operation and wanted us to look after her car. We had sold the Nissan to our friend Els and found another car in a dealer down in Fuengirola. A nice little Hyundai that was automatic which fitted the bill as I was having great difficulty driving and poor Fay had to do it all under some considerable duress. I rather fancied a VW Touran but it had 190,000 kilometres on the clock while the Hyundai only had 42,000 even though it was 13 years old and Stewart said that the Hyundai was the more reliable. It just so happened that Anne and Stewart were coming out this Thursday which suited us fine and would help with the logistics of picking up our new (different) car

As usual the weekend started with bridge and we had to go to Penny and Gary's barbecue on Friday evening. I had all the paraphernalia needed and set out all the tables ready for the fun and frolics to start. The host Gary had decided to have a "*girls against boys*" night so our partners were already decided which meant for a very interesting evening with twelve players and some stonking sausages from the barbecue together with some really tasty pork belly ribs, it was a lovely evening sitting out under the stars, well sitting under the photo electric lights anyway but with lots of conviviality as you would expect when playing bridge.

Fay was all worked up over this coronation and baked a cake specially in the shape of the Union Jack flag and so we gave Anne a call on Saturday morning but she was still in bed but Stewart said we could come down anytime. We had to explain to him that if we

came down it would mean driving two cars back up which Fay wasn't prepared to do until she had had some practice in the automatic car. It was therefore agreed that they would come up as Fay wanted to watch the coronation from the start at 7.30 in the morning and we could go back down later.

The poor Italian car salesman was a little perplexed as we had to change all the plans to pick up the Hyundai and he agreed to see us on Monday morning. So Anne and Stewart arrived in Coin some time on Saturday afternoon and Stewart had brought some paste for rubbing out minor scratches and we had a test on the Mercedes with some minor results but he said there was nothing much to do about the dents in the car doors. So they then drove us down to La Cala to their apartment and we had prebooked a table at our favourite restaurant, Kon Fusion in La Cala and had a cup of tea and a piece of Fay's coronation cake before we set off to town for dinner.

There is a rather jolly waitress at this restaurant who always seems to pick out the problem customers. She immediately recognised Anne and Stewart and then picked on me as I told her I wanted the fabulous lavender Crème Brûlée dessert for my starter. I actually got a bit of it (the candy floss) on my plate of paté and biscuits. As usual we all enjoyed ourselves and made a slow walk back to the apartment.

"What are we going to do today?" was the discussion at the breakfast table on Sunday morning eating our sausage egg and bacon. "There's something on at the Butti Bamba park, run by the Lions charity." So we set off and found lots of activities there with stalls and after a while we settled for a coffee and sat down to watch the Ukrainian Dance Troupe which was very colourful. Then there was a group of singers but

the PA system wasn't set up for groups only individuals but the MC, a Lary Grayson look alike from Manchester ponced about in between acts and it was all very relaxing watching all the activities.

There were choirs, an old time music hall group, and a ukulele band all dressed up in Hawaiian shirts and garlands but you couldn't hear anything other than the back up music, but still entertaining. We stayed on and had some drinks and some chips until the last act came on, the Spice Girls tribute band who were very professional and all had their own microphones so made for a brilliant show which had the audience up on their feet dancing in the late evening sun. We left the dancing bit to the more able folk who obviously were aided by several drinks. We stopped off at the local bar in town on the way back for a night cap and met a Swedish waitress who came from Kista in Stockholm where I worked with Ericsson. It was a wonderful day out and so we staggered back to the apartment and collapsed on to the sofas.

They had been given an Amazon "Firestick" for their new tele in the apartment but were having difficulty getting it to work but eventually we bypassed it and found BBC on the usual channels and caught the last bits of the Royal Concert in Windsor Park and settled down to watch it before staggering off to bed after a wonderful weekend.

There are many ways of making new friends apart from playing bridge. Before we set sail for Spain we had Spanish lessons at the local college in Rugby and later met up with one of our classmates there in Spain. We then carried on with lessons as soon as we arrived. The local Coin Ayuntamiento, town hall had set up classes just down the road from our villa opposite the "Flag" roundabout as opposed to the "Horse" roundabout in El

Rodeo. This kick started a lot of friendships, some of whom have gone back to the UK or died but we set up a long relationship with Marion.

She moved out here not long after her husband died. They were in the hospitality business running restaurants. She was from Southend and was extremely brave to carry on with out him. He was in the Army, the Royal Signals and one of his Army mates, Dave with wife Eve also moved out here and they looked after Marion. She had a lovely villa overlooking the Guadelhorce Valley and we had several parties there. She met up with John Hough, a civil servant in charge of the Defence Budget advising cabinet ministers. They eventually got married and had an enchanting wedding in the Santiago Kitchen in their garden under the shade of the trees. They moved down to La Cala and we introduced them to Anne and Stewart and we would meet up together in a restaurant whenever they came over. John sometimes went golfing with Stewart. We were introduced to Marion's son Lee, and met up with him on our travels in Australia. We had to buy him a meal in Sydney as he was going through a tough period at work for some time. He is now happily married to the lovely Robin and enjoying life in Oz.

We still meet up with some of our Spanish lesson friends: Sue, Gill; Amanda; Dave and Lorraine; Joan; Dave, but not Eve: Brian; Joan to name but a few. Dave and Lorraine were great friends and we had a lot of parties with them. He was ex Navy, he called himself a stoker but was in fact but a Chief Petty Officer Artificer and unfortunately got leukaemia and had to go back to the UK National Health system as he couldn't afford the drugs in Spain.

Dave and Eve helped Marion a lot until she met up with John and we got to know their family and went

over to Sexmo for many parties. Unfortunately he had to go back to the UK with health problems. I didn't quite understand some people returning to the UK with health problems as we had experienced excellent health service here in Spain.

Getting back to making friends at bridge, we had started to go down to play at the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole, a venta just outside of Fuengirola and made friends with Rob and Verity. He was a builder who lived in Leicester and a supporter of the Leicester Tigers. Unfortunately they had to close the bridge club down during Covid and couldn't find anybody to run it and then Rob suddenly died. We made friends with Ben there as well who was brought up in Kenya so we had a few mutterings in Swahili and when Shaelyn came over on holiday we took her down and had one of Ben's curries.

We tried to go to the Danish Ace bridge club in our first years in Spain but didn't like it much and even got an apology from the director for their bad behaviour so moving forward to 2023 we tried again as some of our ABC (Alhaurin Bridge Club) friends tried it and said that they enjoyed it there. So now we decided to go to the Norwegian Chispa bridge club and the Danish Ace club in Fuengirola and started meeting old friends from the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole.

One of the founder members of the Ace club Jens, a Danish gentleman invited us to join him for a barbecue with other members and so we went down with Christiane a German lady who ran the Wednesday club in Cartama. We were given directions and came off the main road to the coast and off into the campo and I suddenly realised that we had been this way before with Annie who took us down to a barbecue in what Fay and I described as a Wild West outpost. It had a group there bashing out some old rock and roll numbers,

badly but the food was to die for coming off the barbeque.

Eventually we found Jens' home, more like a fort. It was straight out of the film "The Alamo", an old adobe built fort with castellations even a bell tower, and gun ports, together with old rusty canons and even canon balls. It was totally enchanting but not somewhere where we would like to live.

Yolante, a Polish lady who spoke about half a dozen languages took me on a tour of the place. Jens collected old guns and had a couple of elephant tusks reminding me of my calligraphy work for a Kenyan safari company who did a certificate for the 100 pounder club.. Jens' grandfather had shot the elephant and had his name on a roll of honour along with European royalty. It had rooms and out buildings all over the place and even a small lake where he had built a dam.

It was a lovely day out making more friends from god knows how many countries. When I returned to the bridge club I took Jens one of my hand made "Thank you" cards. It was about this time that the club had their annual general meeting and Jens had to hand over the reins to Ben, our Indian friend from the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole and within weeks we got invited down to one of *his* barbeques.

Ben was born in Kenya and left there just as I arrived in 1963 just after "Uhuru", independence when Jomo Kenyatta waved his fly wisk shouting "Harambee". When we arrived we met a lot of his Indian friends. Some relatives who lived with him in Kenya and some who came from Glasgow where Ben had a hotel. There was one lady who I would describe as an old biddy but very well dressed in Indian rich costume. She was a member of the Ace bridge club and arrived at Ben's

place in a Mercedes Maybach, the most expensive car ever made, normally made for Presidents and Royalty and it came with an Iranian chauffeur. Another couple there were from Seattle and had another house in Hawaii and they showed us a photo of their enormous motor yacht.

## Cars

Seeing that enormous German car has relived my memories of cars. I have always had an interest in them, I would hardly call myself a "Petrolhead" unlike our German friend Dieter with his collection but ever since I was young enough to sit in my Dad's car I have always enjoyed watching the development of the automobile and had a desire to own a big, fast limousine. My Dad's first car that I can remember seeing in photographs was in Canada , a Dodge, two door saloon. The first car I rode in was his Standard Eight. They all had leather seats with front opening doors, then he progressed to a Vauxhall Big 6 which towed our caravan and then the Ford V8 Pilot which rumbled along. He progressed to an Austin Princess which was an even bigger rumbler and far more dangerous as Mum had to push the clutch in with Dad's walking stick on the demand "Clutch ducky!" from Dad. I was terrified when sitting in the back on the rare occasions I had to ride with them.

Austins obviously ran in the family blood as my first two cars were Austins. Talk about from the sublime to the ridiculous. The first car was a 1934 Austin two seater open tourer for want of as better description. I think it was originally a "Nippy" but got altered to a hill climber version and then altered back again to a road version. It was in British Racing Green, although it couldn't go faster than fifty miles an hour down hill with a following wind. It had a leather belt holding the bonnet down and n MG petrol tank on the back. It only had one headlight as that was the minimum legal requirement at the time with motor cycle mudguards and a straight through exhaust. I would often get strange looks from the police who would sometimes stop me with a quip "nice day for open driving sir!"

It had a 750 cc engine with a crash gear box which meant double declutching and in those days you would think nothing about changing the cylinder head gasket which involved grinding the valves into place with special grinding paste. It had a "Three Nuns" tobacco tin oil filter. I kept it in a old farm building in Locking village opposite the RAF camp as we were not allowed cars during our apprentice ship which was my downfall as I abandoned the car outside the Officers married quarters and the local police eventually traced me as the owner and I got 28 days in the "cooler" or

local camp prison, i was allowed out during the day to do the classes but had to be back in the cell, sleeping on a board on the floor. It however was a blessing in disguise as I got to know all the "Snowdrops" or RAF police and they would turn a blind eye to my parking the car on camp later.



My first car: 1945 Austin Seven "Special"

I drove it up to our current home in Reading and it only took me six months as it kept breaking down. The trouble was mostly the radiator which I had to use

Colman's Mustard powder to stop the leaks. It only had one headlight which was the law at the time. I took Dad for a run in it which terrified him. Revenge is sweet! He could hardly get into it with his dodgy hip. I bought the car with Cyril for about £20 and eventually bought out my share and then my next car was an Austin 16, wedding taxi with a Hooper body (Rolls Royce) with an extra drop down row of seats in the back and a partition and a megaphone to talk to the driver. It had Bedford cord seats and pull down window blinds. Underneath across the front of the driver's seats was a green baize lined tool box and it had four hand pumped hydraulic lifts for each wheel in the event of a puncture. This cost me the amazing amount of £50 which I paid on hire purchase. I bought it from "Honest Uncle Harry" complete with camel hair overcoat and trilby, the original Arthur Daley. It was two tone black, mat and gloss and built so high that you could stand up inside it with your top hat on for the wedding. It looked rather like a hearse from a distance and the camp joke (RAF Stanbridge) was that the next dance would be held in the back of Paddy's hearse!



From the sublime to the ridiculous, from the Austin 7 to my second car,a 1949 Austin 16 wedding taxi limousine.

It was then that I got posted to Hong Kong and got rather drunk one night and sold the Austin 16 Limousine in the NAAFI in Stanbridge for one pound. So my next car was a Rover 75 when I was in Kenya. This was a rather posh car with a fluid fly wheel which I didn't really understand but apparently you could change gear without using the cutch. I couldn't figure it although I did manage it a few times but it was rather like double declutching. It wasn't really suited for the

rough roads of the countryside but it we managed to get down to Mombasa all right even though everything was covered in the red murrum dust. There was very few tarmac roads outside the towns and the red roads evolved into corrugated ridges but if you drove on the other side of the road you went with ripples so our 300 mile drive down to the coast was punctuated by having to get back on to the right side of the road to oncoming vehicles and then both returning back to the other side of the road!

The drive back wasn't so lucky on our return as we hit a stone and punctured the petrol tank. We had to wait for the next vehicle to come along who would then drive on to the next garage and alert the rescue vehicle to come to our aid. He managed to put the tank back in position and then took out a bar of Sunlight Soap and applied it to the hole in the tank. I always carried that bar with me.

The Rover 75 at Ruiru, Kenya 1964



Once again I had to leave the car behind when I returned to the UK and never got anything for it but I had saved up some money in my POSB (Post Office Savings Book) and upon my return home bought a Humber Hawk. What beautiful car owned previously by a worker in Rolls Royce. It was two tone blue with bench front seats and a column gear change. I drove it up to Scotland for my next posting at RAF Balado Bridge , a transmitter site neat Kinross in Fife where I met my beloved Fay.



1967: My Humber Hawk in the police compound after the accident

I used it as a wedding taxi for our RAF cook and it was mistaken for a taxi one night outside the Kinross dance hall as I waited by two young ladies who I ran home to Dunfermline but the poor chap I was supposed to take back to camp was not well pleased. Then one dark wet night I was coming into a tight corner and a minivan came round too fast and did a broadside into my front. It peeled the van side open and the two drunken occupants ended up underneath the van one of whom was dead upon arrival of the emergency services. The Procurator Fiscal told me I couldn't take my third

party claim against the driver as he had no assets and a family to support so once again I lost all my money but fortunately I met a young lady with a Ford Zephyr Zodiac to take me out.



My half brother, Simon's Swallow Doretti circa 1960.



Peugeot 404 Cyprus 1968 at Troodos mountains

I had to go back to RAF Locking for a cypher course for my next posting and met a lady there with a Mark Ten Jaguar so the Zodiac got kicked into touch but it wasn't long before I saw the error of my ways and true love came to the rescue. But I had to leave her and go to Cyprus where I bought a Peugeot 404. The 404 was the most popular car in Kenya winning the East African Safari rally and it was used by the locals as a taxi which could take up to eight passengers in the estate. I actually managed to sell it before returning and bought a little Austin A40 when I got posted to Greatworth. I would drive it up to Scotland at weekends off to see my beloved through hail and snow, over hills and mountains and after a year when we got married it had to bring all the wedding presents back from Scotland. It died just a few miles from our destination and I assumed it had breathed its last breath having served us well then the breakdown man arrived and informed us that it was just a loose petrol pipe connection.



(archive photo ) Austin A 40.

So I started my life as a civilian and in 1972 and we traded our little A40 in for a Fiat 124 and when I joined UDT I was given a company car. a brand new yellow Morris Marina which I promptly reversed into the car park wall on my first day. I had that for a year or two and when I joined the Equitable I was given a bright orange air cooled Citroen which sounded like a tractor. My next company car was a big automatic Ford Consul which was second hand but given to me when I joined ITT to run until my brand new two tone brown automatic Ford Cortina arrived. Fords weren't the most reliable cars in those days and an automatic is a bugger to get kick started when it breaks down as it hasn't got a clutch.

It had to go into the garage quite a lot and I was given a complimentary car but that broke down one day and I had to change from an automatic to a

manual and back again and when I arrived home at Greenacres Drive I was a little confused when trying to put it into the garage and drove into it before opening the garage door. This was the cause of much mirth from everybody with signs appearing saying "It wasn't me" from Fay and "Open door before entering" from our neighbours.



My first automatic car, Ford Consul in 1977  
with Trevor at the wheel.

The last phase of company cars was with Ericsson and I was given a Volvo to start with which I described as a Swedish Army officer's personnel carrier. It was big and lumpy and soon got replaced by the more sportier Saab 90 which the family loved with a large boot and we added cycle holders for when we would go up to Rutland Water we went on holidays to France in the Saab.



The Swedish army officers armoured personnel carrier,  
the Volvo, the first company car with Ericsson.



The first Saab 90, circa 1984



Antony at the wheel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saab 900 circa 1986



The last of the Swedish company cars, the Saab 900



Trev's Peugeot



Fay's Ford Fiesta



Fay showing off in Ian's Jag



Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Honda Accord circa 1997



Fay's Fiat Tipo



Antony's Astra GTX



The last company car 1992

For the last few years in the UK Fay was working hard in BACP. BAC now had the Psychotherapy addition to it's membership and she wanted her own choice of cars. She was sick and tired of having to put petrol in and didn't want a red car as everybody at work had red cars. So it had to be economical and easy to park. It was Wimbledon fortnight as she decided to get a different car so I left her watching the tennis and set off in the morning around the dealers in Rugby with a spread sheet set up to offer her a range of cars. I got back and after lunch it was raining in Wimbledon so she joined me in furthering the search. This time we tried Leicester and eventually looked for the Citroen dealer. I happened to have a bridge pal with a second hand dealership so stopped off on the way to ask directions. Fay got out and had a wander around and came across a Honda Civic automatic.

"I want this one" she said. I explained that it wasn't the most economic of cars being an automatic

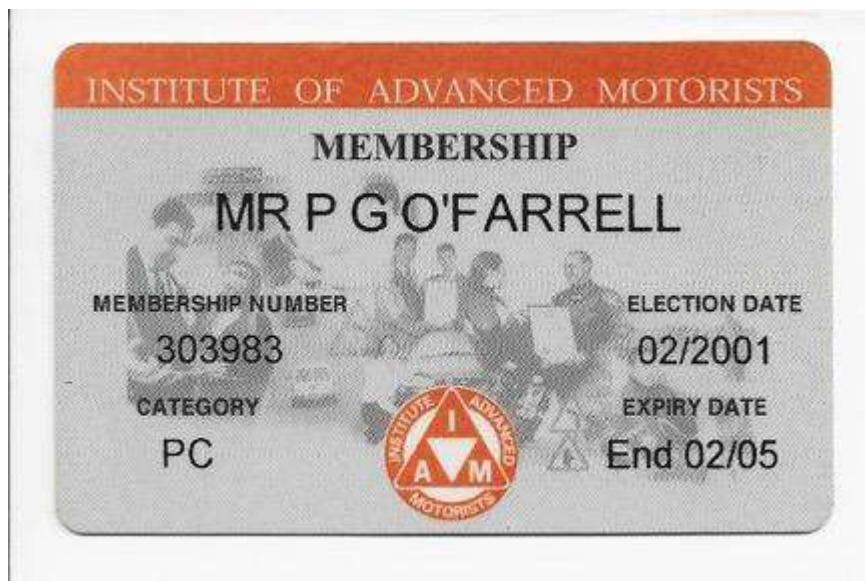
"but it's got black leather seats and it has a fairing on the back". So that was that, I threw the spread sheet out of the window and we bought it. She loved it and the only thing that went wrong with it was the windscreen wiper motor which was replaced by one from the breakers yard at virtually no expense.



(archive photo) Fay's little baby Honda with black leather seats.

The RAF driving course was very similar to an advanced course and I had always fancied doing a proper advanced driving course. So I made contact with the local branch and started lessons. My instructor was a midwife who had nineteen accidents in a year before deciding to improve her driving and now taught. I must have had about a dozen lessons before she felt I was ready to take the driving test and she informed me that the examiner was a Leicester Tigers supporter so I chucked my Tigers scarf into the back seat before setting off to the Narborough Road Police Station. Once in the car with the examiner you have to discuss the weather and road conditions before setting off and then he gives you directions and tells you to "drive from A to B in good time" to your destination which means you can't hang about but at the same time keep within the local speed limits.

I passed with a big sigh of relief having been undertaken at a road junction by a milk float. One of the benefits of the membership of the advance motorists is the availability of reduced motor insurance but after several quotes still ended up with Tesco insurance. I now felt privileged to be an advanced motorist but within six months ran into the back of two cars. "Nice advanced driving Dad" was my son's comment.



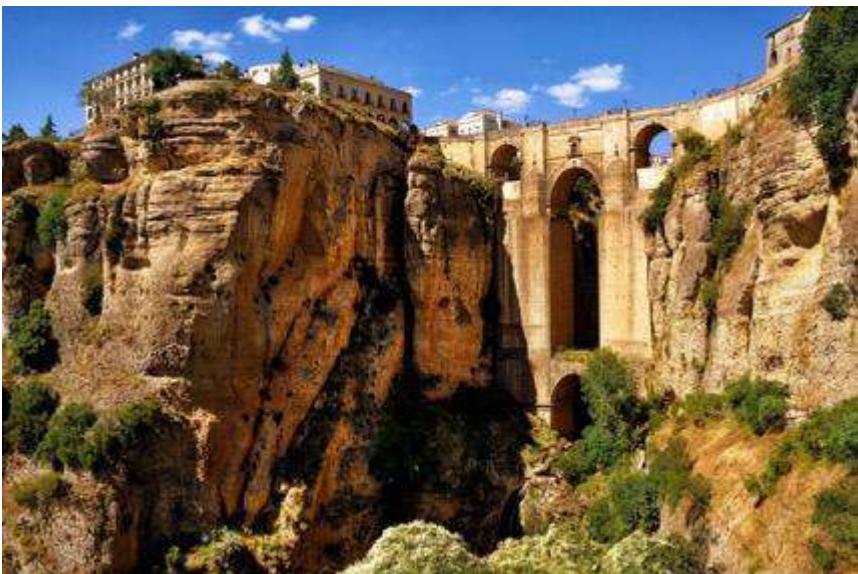


The first private new car we purchased was a Nissan X Trail in 2006 which lasted us for 17 years and 200,000 kilometres before my knees gave in and we had to have an automatic.

Our last car? A Hyundai I 30 automatic purchased  
after the knees gave in.



## **By road or rail to Rhonda**



There are two ways, well actually three ways to get to Rhonda from Coin: you could drive South down to the coast and then West past Marbella and then North up the winding road, like a figure six but a long way round. The most direct route is to go North West through Alozaina and El Burgo past the Parque Nacional Sierra de las Nieves, (the mountains you can see from our top patio) a short winding picturesque route but the fastest way is to take the A357 road to Campillos past Ardales and the lakes with the famous Camanito del Rey.



That is a deep gorge between the lakes and El Chorro where they filmed Frank Sinatra in "Von Ryans Express" and is now a big tourist attraction having built a breathtaking walk way along the sides of canyon. Antony, Lisa and myself did that a few years ago and it was exhilarating to say the least.



Once past Ardales you then turn left and bypass Teba to go West past acres of dry farm land. Teba has a history stretching back to Roman and Neolithic times. Its true to claim to fame, however, is in the events of 25 August 1330. In the thick of the Reconquest, that year Teba was under siege by the armies of King Alfonso XI of Castilla, determined to take this important strategic site from the occupying Moors.

That day in 1330, Alfonso's forces received unexpected police backup from the army being led to the Crusades by Sir James Douglas, **or** Black Douglas, a fearsome warrior whose name was invoked against misbehaving children for centuries afterwards. Douglas had helped Robert the Bruce defeat Edward II and the English at Bannockburn in 1314. When Robert the Bruce died in 1329, his heart was cut out and placed in a small silver casket, said to be one of the king's favourites, and was taken by Douglas on his Crusade, ostensibly to give cheer to the soldiers.

En route through Spain, Douglas encountered Alfonso's army, and presented himself and a letter of introduction from the then King Edward III. The bloodthirsty Crusader eagerly threw his forces behind those of Alfonso's, and in an attempt to inspire his men into even greater bravery hurled the locket containing Robert the Bruce's heart into the fray, plunging in after it.

The locket was retrieved but, alas, Black Douglas wasn't. The locket was returned to Melrose Abbey, where the new king, David II, son of Robert, wanted it buried. During archaeological investigations in 1996, a small container was found in the alleged site of the burial. It was found to contain a small conical casket

about ten inches high by four in diameter at its base, tapering to a flat lid at the top about one and a half inches across. Although worn with age the casket was still in good condition and bore a legible inscription: The enclosed leaden casket containing a heart was found beneath Chapter House floor, March 1921, by His Majesty's Office of Works. The casket containing the heart was not re-opened on this occasion, but buried again during a private ceremony at Melrose Abbey on 22 June 1998. Every Year a large contingent of Scots arrive in Teba kilted with their bagpipes to celebrate this famous event.

There used to be a lovely restaurant we used to go to just past Teba in a converted old olive mill with the press machinery still inside and a lovely courtyard with olive trees for shade. The food was delicious but the main attraction was the complete silence as you sat outside and looked up to see the eagles soaring off the thermals on the side of the cliffs.

Once you get to Rhonda parking is usually a problem as it is a big tourist attraction with loads of Japanese all over the place but it does have a beautiful bull ring with a museum inside and there are some lovely old Spanish restaurants tucked away in the back streets. I found a hat shop that made all the hats themselves and bought a nice Panama "type" hat.

The town overlooks a deep ravine with stunning views to the south but if you bypass the town and drive north up to Seville there is a turn off to Benaójen a dreamy little hamlet on the rail line from Algeciras to Rhonda. It has a stunning hotel there: the Molino del Santo, again surrounded by a wall of silence apart from a dribbling stream. Fay's ex Chief Exec Judith's daughter and family used to stay there and we would

join them for a delightful lunch at the side of the stream.

The local railway station was enchanting with lots of hanging flower baskets and the railway line had an interesting history. The railway from Algeciras to Rhonda was built by a British Engineer, Mr Henderson in 1890 and was designed to offer the Army Officers based at Gibraltar the chance to go up for a break in some of the luxury hotels in Rhonda.

We heard about this and with our friends Paula and Joe took the opportunity to go for a ride on the train. We left the car at San Roque and got on board. It travelled up through this beautiful valley past all these enchanting little villages with stunning views. The problem being it was a normal scheduled train journey for the locals who would pull down the sun shade visors which limited our views of the country side.

## **My road to sophistication: the opera.**

As part of my ongoing education into the realms of sophistication I went to the live streaming from the Covent Garden Royal Opera House of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in our local cinema here in Coin. It cost 12 Euros for the best seat in the house with varied camera angles and close ups of the performers as opposed to £61 to £230 the only draw back is that it is four hours long but there is an interval for a pee break but can the stomach last that long?



Well, Grand Opera to Bland Opera!

The set was completely devoid of any scenery, the thinking was that this would focus the players and the audience on the quality of the music and singing but unfortunately it completely denudes any atmosphere of the opera. Grand Opera was intended to bring magnificence and beauty into the mundane lives of the audience.

This setting could have been Milan or Milton Keynes and they did this to the last opera I went to see, Carmen which is one of the most colourful settings in the world and turned Seville into Scunthorpe, apologies to Scunthorpe.

One of the problems is that the opera is sung in Italian and when it's streamed it is with Spanish subtitles , so what you need to do is swat up on the story before you go to the cinema. So before the day I went on to Google and printed off a précis of the opera and feeling full of myself with the full knowledge and history of the opera sat down and relaxed but to my horror realised that I had mistaken Il Travatore for La Traviata another of young Giuseppe's operas so had to sit through four hours of gibberish and try to get some idea of the plot, fortunately a young lady gives you a brief synopsis at the beginning of the show on the screen which involved scenes taken from Heironymous Bosch's paintings, he was a Dutch artist who liked to scare the hell out of the everybody in the Middle Ages with paintings of Hell depicting scenes of weird beasts devouring naked people falling down to their damnation and some scenes in the opera were cleverly composed to seem similar to such devilish activities.

So I wasn't completely ignorant of the situation and sat back and enjoyed it but as it was so long I had Fay make me up a sandwich with a bottle of water to have during the intermission. It started at 8.15 and

finished at 12.15 so was too early to eat and all the local restaurants would be closed by the time it finished. There used to be an Italian restaurant in the shopping centre which gave you two free glasses of wine after the cinema but it had closed down. Then I suddenly realised that I hadn't brought a house key with me and would be locked out so had to unlock my phone during the intermission and text a help message to my beloved who replied "what a shame"! That's love for you!

## **Summer of 2023**

This summer was the hottest on record in Spain and one Saturday afternoon it was 42 ° C and we didn't know what to do with ourselves so sod it! Let's get in an air conditioned car and drive down to the coast to the Ace Bridge club with an Air Condition club house. The standard there was considerably higher than our local club in Alhaurin Golf with international and professional members. We came top, which was very pleasing, but the next day we had been invited down to a pool party by Janne at her German boyfriend's place near Elveria.

So we are now talking non bridge playing friends. Janne was our Danish neighbour in Calle San Boi until she and Benny split up and she was now living in luxury with Deiter. He had a haulage / logistics company in Germany contracted to Airbus hauling bloody great aircraft bits round Europe and had sold it and made a fortune and now spends his time buying cars and motor bikes. He has 3 Harley Davidsons , two of which are in the lounge and a couple more in the garage. He has recently bought Janne a small motor bike for a learner and they have planned to go riding round Portugal in the near future.

He has just sold off 4 cars and is left with two hot rod cars, a open tourer BMW, a Mercedes SUV, and has just purchased a Chevrolet Corvette. He has this beautiful, nearly finished house and recently completed one of his projects, a swimming pool, so we had been invited down to christen the pool with some of his and Janne's friends.

Before she met Deiter she had a Danish boyfriend who had a pool party and invited Janne's friends Christian and Jane. Christian was Danish working in the

petro chemical industry in Aberdeen and Jane was English. They had a holiday home in Cartama close to Janne's son Sebastian's school. Their finca didn't have electricity or running water. They had two children a daughter Amhara, now at Glasgow University who is now in a romantic engagement with Sebastian, and an twelve year old son Milo. He was a bit of a character and introduced me to "Twerking" a sort of dance somewhere between the twist and the Lambada which involved a lot of hip movements. Anyway I had a go and they took a picture of me which ended up in Facebook but we had a great time with lots of laughing and they turned up now at Deiter's pool party. I had been previously alerted about this and quickly knocked up a humorous certificate about a Twerking Syndrome and the hospitalisation needed to repair the damage. This went down well and the party got off to a great start.



Mental Health and Sanity  
sponsors of the  
Self Help Information on  
Twerking Syndromes , SHITS,



hereby certify that

Paddy "Snake Hips" O'Farrell  
has attended the

**Twerking Syndrome  
Rehabilitation Centre**

And after intensive surgery the hips have  
been realigned to reduce any swaying,  
grinding or suggestive groinal movements.  
With similar operations, the knees have been  
recalibrated now to allow the patient to walk in an  
upright and straight forward action.

The Anti Twerking Trauma Team of para medics  
are on high alert should this syndrome return  
and must be notified immediately upon any  
spasmodic or gyratory hip movements.

This is an official SHITS leaflet available with any of  
Paddy's books when free downloaded from [obooko.com](http://obooko.com)  
Primrose Cottage  
MCC Muddelcombe Cricket Club  
[theadventuresofDenseDimmockandBorisSevenBelliesSlobovitch.com](http://theadventuresofDenseDimmockandBorisSevenBelliesSlobovitch.com)

Now Dieter had invited two Dutch friends to this pool party, John and Anita, she was a member of the La Cala Lions. Anita warmed to me when I said John was her father and we hit it off together and then some incredible coincidences started happening. Fay goes to a spiritual group in Benalmadena which we call "The Spooks" and she has a friend there called Anita who was president of the La Cala Lions who knew the Dutch Anita and it was the Lions Anita who introduced Janne to Deiter. Coincidence? You ain't heard nothing yet.

I started talking about satellite TV and how I had started up a company in the late eighties before Sky TV appeared and how you had to have a large 1,5 metre dish with a motorised arm to allow it to scan the Cark Belt of geo stationary satellites. I mentioned that the family, when the boys were about eight and ten, would sit down and watch an Italian Quiz show on a Sunday afternoon after lunch which involved young ladies having to take off garments of clothing when the contestants got a wrong answer. John and Christian both looked at me and shouted "Tutti Frutti". I couldn't believe it. They both, a Dutchman and a Dane in different countries must have had a large motorised dish and found the same Italian TV satellite programme in the same era as myself at the same time.

### Dragon flies and bridge parties

Are there any entomologists out there who can please help me unravel the mysteries of dragonflies? Every year I have a dragonfly follow me around the pool while I'm swimming. I can even get within inches and eyeball him on the edge of the pool, presuming it's a male, for several seconds before he lifts off, hovers and zooms off for another circle of the pool.

I was discussing this with my Danish neighbour the other day and he had just seen my Facebook article about Gonads and asked if they were anything to do with dragon flies. Fortunately I was able to use the full extent of my subtle articulation of the English language to relieve him of his curiosity but nobody has yet to relieve me of my curiosity concerning dragon flies.

I think now is a good time to expand on the benefits of playing bridge. It's in the middle of October in 2023: the long hot summer year that broke climate temperature records. It hit 42° C here in Coin in August. "Damn ridiculous" as Fay's brother-in-law Bobbie would say in a broad Fife accent and that day we decided enough was enough and we jumped into our air conditioned car and drove down to Fuengirola to an air conditioned bridge club: the Ace club. We actually managed to come top. I think all the Swedish internationals had gone back to Sweden to their plunge pools and saunas. I was still swimming in our "fresh" pool until it went down to 21° C, it was a good season for swimming as I started on and off in the end of March and still accompanied by my dragon fly friends.

So we invited ten people round for a barbecue. Now I am a purist when it comes to barbequing as we always get invited to a barbecue which is in fact only food cooked on a mobile gas kitchen range, not over searing hot briquette coals. Any way our guests arrived at 3 o'clock. I was under the impression they weren't due until 4.30 and was still asleep in my siesta swing but I managed to dash around and complete all the furniture lay out arrangements on the top patio.

We were short of a table and some bidding boxes as all my boxes were in the Los Arcos venta for the U3A bridge class. I got all our guests their drinks. We had a fridge fully stocked with wine and beer and gin and

tonics and all they wanted was fizzy water, but I managed to sweet talk them into an alternative and we eventually got everybody sitting down on the tables ready for bridge. Most bridge parties arrange for interesting changes in partnership but we just told our guests to get on with it and choose their own partners.

Fay and I started off with Steve and Jenny who bought round a spare table and bidding boxes. Steve was an accountant, an FCA (fucking clever accountant, he tells us) but since retiring has picked up Parkinsons disease but is still compos mentis. Jenny, a PA in the IT services, his second wife has the complexion of a baby and the figure of a teenager and they make up a lovely couple and live about six kilometres away in a lovely villa in the "campo". They joined my U3A bridge class a few years ago and are one of my challenges in bridge teaching terms but great fun to be with.

On the other tables were Roswitha and Els. Roswitha is a German lady, trained in the family business in Germany as a furrier who recently lost her husband Peter, both great friends of ours who lived in the Alhaurin Golf urbanisation and played in the Monday bridge club. They lived in Harlow for part of the year and when my Step Mum had to be moved to a home and I had to clear her house they very kindly lent me one of their Honda CRVs and I stayed in their lovely modern home. I saw a lovely photo of them when they got married and she was a spitting image of Mary Quant and Peter was extremely tall and handsome in a pin striped suit.

Els is a Belgium lady, trained as a lawyer and divorced from an Osteopath who recently turned up in our Austrian lady, Eva's house looking after her after since her stroke. We have had Els and another German, Erik round for bridge and trained him from scratch but Els

had had some bridge experience several years before. I now have Els round for a calligraphy class every week and we have become great friends helping her in her break up from John. She brought our old Nissan X Trail from us when we had to find an automatic car. She has now joined the U3A class and plays with Roswitha on Monday nights in our "competitive" club. She has been invaluable as an interpreter for us and speaks God knows how many languages.

Moving on to the other tables we find Sue and Dave. Dave was in the RAF just a few years after I joined up and we have long talks about "muck and bullets" in the Middle East and other exotic postings. They owned five houses one of which was on the River Thames in Surry. He is a diabetic although you wouldn't know it as he polished off a bottle of red wine and the remains of my bottle of whisky that night but was in a jolly mood. We like to see our guests enjoy themselves. We recently went to their lovely villa in the "campo" for a bridge lunch and Sue made a Baked Alaska especially for me. Sue is a lovely person so kind hearted and thoughtful, again members of my U3A class on Thursday mornings.

Gary and Penny are the youngest in the party, although she informed me that it was her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday today which took the wind out of my sales as I had her down for about 50. They are from the Midlands where Garry worked as an aeronautical engineer for Dowty on various projects including the Buccaneer and Concorde. She was a Civil Servant proof reader and proof read all my books. She gave me some strange looks when she finished them but they made their money buying and selling endurance horses. I'd never heard of them before but obviously big business as they had property in Wales and the USA. They lived free in a casita, a

small house and looked after a bigger house and land owned by family from Texas.

Then there was Tom and Anne teachers from Dublin who come over to Spain when ever the EU entrance laws allowed. They shared a large house in the campo with their son, an architect who worked from home with his gay partner and a bloody great big dog. Tom was intrigued by my barbeque and immediately broke it and had to do a running repair in order to get it working again.

So we played bridge and obviously there where drinks which eventually turned from water to wine and nibbles and after a couple of hours the barbeque was lit and the chicken and sausages put on and the bridge ended and all the scoring was finished and more wine was consumed until at last the food was ready. I'd cooked twenty sausages and twelve large chicken thighs. I'd also prepared my speciality potato salad while Fay had done a lovely tomato and garlic dish and a green salad along with a pasta salad. We had to go through all the various canapés to start with and of course this added to the drinking time. The main course was eventually finished and I mean finished. They'd eaten all the sausages and chicken leaving nothing for tomorrow's lunch. I held out a cap at the end to try and get some money for the lunch.

Fay had knocked up an enormous pavlova which was too big for our dishes so had to be served on an oven tray and all that went as well and so the evening progressed and the wine flowed and after my special Irish Coffees and the whisky ran out and a considerable amount of even more wine had been consumed our merry guests gave up and staggered home. One of the problems of having a party at our villa is that we live on three levels which required a lot of running/staggering

up and down to satisfy our guests needs so by the end of the evening I was completely knackered.

I hope that gives my readers the sort of life bridge players have to put up with. I slept for eleven and three quarter hours that night and would have made it twelve hours if I hadn't have had to get up for a pee.

## **Friends and Halloween 2023**

One of the reasons for writing this book is not to leave any unanswered questions for my family. I have so many unanswered questions of my parents: I know virtually nothing about my mother and apart from some photographs, I know very little about my father. I was either in boarding school or in the RAF before I could sit down and talk to him and then it was too late. He must have had an incredibly interesting life all over the world but we never got round to talking about it.

Another reason is to demonstrate the benefits of playing bridge. You can go virtually anywhere in the world to play bridge. Let's just stick a pin on a map of southern Africa.

Botswana Bridge Federation.  
Tel+267 367 4000  
[Emailsport@bnsc.co.bw](mailto:Emailsport@bnsc.co.bw)

You know that you can contact them and meet up with similar minded, friendly, sociable people and have an instant, enjoyable, social life delivered to you on a plate.

However that's not to say that the only friends you have are bridge players. I have been blessed with some wonderful close friends, some of whom have been mentioned already: Tony and Pat; Richard and Rita; Bob and Sylvia; Ian and Delia; Paula and Joe, to mention but a few.

Then I can add all Fay's Scottish friends and relatives, especially Anne and Stewart. I first met Anne's father, Walter or Wattie as he was known in the pubs around Fife, some time before my courting days

with Fay while I was stationed at RAF Balado in Kinross. He and his wife Mairn owned a coal business and he was well known around the area for taking the drink and would turn up, still in his working overalls, black as a tinker in the various local pubs at night after a hard day's work, a drunk as a skunk but harmless and always good for a laugh.

Then one night when I was out with Fay, uncle Wattie rolls up, black as the ace of spades in our pub, and as usual extremely jolly. I couldn't understand why Fay then dived under the table as he comes across and greets me. Fay eventually reveals herself and looking at the two of us he says to me and a red faced Fay "Och, you ken ma wee lassie Fay then?"

I had a lot of laughs with that family and went to Anne and Stewarts wedding. Stewart was a professional football player then (he played with Sir Alex Ferguson) and he dragged me round to watch the Scottish second division football matches and some times played golf with him and his team mates around the beautiful and cheap courses in Fife. The municipal courses would cost no more the thirty bob in those days. That's one pound fifty. There were some lovely stories about those lowly football clubs: in a club match at Cowdenbeath we sat in the director's box. You could tell it was the director's box because the seats had backs to them!

Anne and Stewart started a family and now have an apartment in La Cala down on the coast where we go for our summer holidays! She supplies me with my laxative powders that she gets free from the Scottish NHS and also my pre siesta marshmallow prescription!

Then of course there's the neighbours. We've mentioned Pablo and Antonia and family but they live four doors down. Our immediate neighbours are Manual

and Puri. They are retired school teachers. They are a bit churchified, are members of the local choral society of which she is president. We went to one of their concerts in a freezing cold convent in Coin town and had to listen to the speeches afterwards for an hour. Not as long as the speeches at Shaelyn's christening, which lasted 2 hours from Lorraine's South African church preacher.

Then on the other side we have the Danish quarter. Benny and Janne were terrific neighbours until they split up. One of the first times we met them was at New Years Eve in Coin. Coin is famous throughout Spain, on Spanish TV, and we were walking through town and bumped into a pack of cards. It was Benny, Janne, Sebastian and Laura in fancy dress. That was 15 years ago and how things have changed. Sebastian, now 6 foot four has just graduated while Laura is in Denmark on a Landscape Gardner's apprenticeship. Benny married the "tart" from Gusmans and after a traumatic time Janne has found happiness with Deiter, a German living in Elvira on the coast near Marbella whom we have already mentioned. He's down to his last eight cars and four Harley Davidsons. Poor soul, don't you just want to grieve for him, but he has made Janne very happy with her own florist shop in his house still keeping very busy doing wedding flower arrangements in the summer.

We had some fantastic parties in San Boi and now that she has moved she has the space to do even greater occasions and we went down to their Halloween party. It was a get together of all her old friends from her shop in Fuengirola and Deiter's German fiends. It was a little United Nations.

Of course Danish Christian and English Jane who live in Aberdeen were there with their twerking son,

Milo. Then there was the Rumanian couple, Valentin, the chauffeur and his wife Cecilia who was a florist and worked for Janne and has now rejoined her in her wedding trade. Anna from Sweden another florist was there with her husband Arsi, from Finland and then John and Anita from Holland both in full Halloween costumes.

The lady who runs the Centro Idea, what we call the Danish Centre was there with another Danish girl friend. Janne is well known for organising fantastic parties and this one was no exception. The food was to die for. She had caterers in but also everybody brought something, Fay with her sherry trifle especially for Dieter. It was a great night out, a lot better than boring bridge!

## **Bridge Clubs**

Rubber bridge is easily played in your own home or someone else's house as long as there is plenty of food and drink but duplicate bridge needs a large enough venue to hold normally at least twenty people and then of course you have to have all the necessary equipment such as the baize card tables, bidding boxes, boards and all the relevant movement system cards not forgetting pencils and score sheets and somebody at the end to do all the scoring. It is normal to have a tournament director as well to adjudicate over disputes and also to ensure the correct etiquette is adhered to. The first time we moved up to the giddy world of duplicate bridge we were literally terrified and if it hadn't been for the lovely old Les Tottman to guide us through the etiquette we would have never have returned.

This was in Lutterworth bridge club which held it's weekly evening meetings in the Grammar School. We out grew that and moved to the Working Men's Club but got thrown out of there for unruly behaviour. That was the standing joke. It was really that they felt a little inhibited while we were there unable to swear and curse while we were playing bridge. So we then moved to the village hall in Côtesbach, a strange little hamlet a few miles outside Lutterworth which could just about squeeze 8 tables in and had an honesty bar but is still going to this day.

Fay and changed partners and I played with Lloyd, a very good player but we still playing with other partners locally. Lloyd and I played at Rugby Bridge Club which then lead on to the Warwickshire league which meant travelling as far as Stratford on Avon and then we played at the Blaby Bridge Club in Leicester which meant playing in the Leicestershire league and

travelling to places like Loughborough and Melton Mowbray. So we got about a bit and played in some large clubs one of them in Coventry was in a lovely old three story Tudor building in Spon Street and I've met up with some people here in Spain who played there.

You got awarded Master Points at each club after each meeting similar to the rankings in Judo as with different belts up to the black belt and then on to the Dan ratings. And then there were national competitions such as simultaneous pairs competitions when hands would be pre dealt and played on one day throughout the country. A local master with 100 MPs (master points); a club master, 200 MPs; area master, 500 MPs; district master 1000 MPs; county master, 2500 MPs; master, 5000; advanced master, 7500; master , 10,000; one star master,15,000 MPs; two star master, 20,000, etc up to five star master. I managed to get up to the two star level before we moved.





**THE MASTER POINT SCHEME**  
**Member Statement**

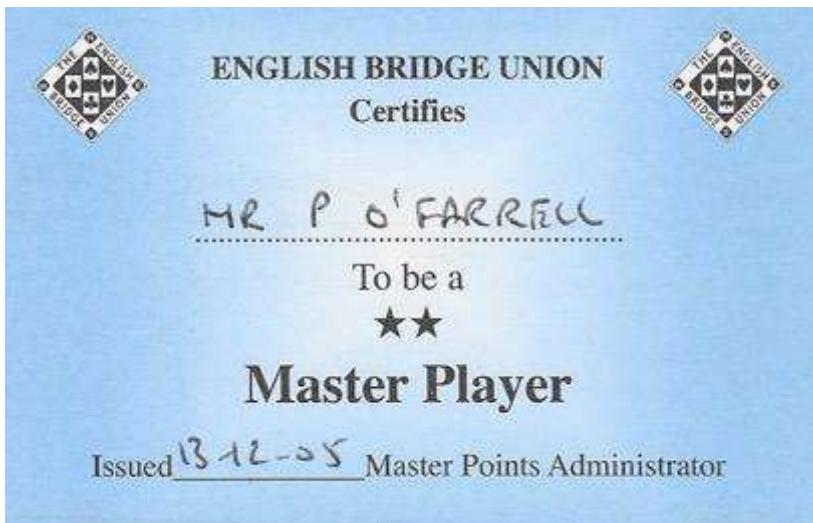


Member: 117561 Mr P O'Farrell

Statement Date: 13 December 2005

Current Rank: 2 Star Master

		Local	Green	Total
<b>Total at last registration</b>		13316	0	13316
<b>Previous year points just registered:</b>				
Year	Event			
2004	CDC Blaby Bridge Club 1	120	0	120
2004	Leicester Direct Credit	1060	0	1060
2004	CDC Blaby Bridge Club 2	80	0	80
2005	CDC Blaby Bridge Club 3	40	0	40
2005	CDC Blaby Bridge Club 5	75	0	75
2005	CDC Blaby Bridge Club 6	30	0	30
2005	Normal Claim	1435	0	1435
<b>Current year points just registered:</b>				
Year	Event			
2006	CDC Blaby Bridge Club 7	170	0	170
2006	Normal Claim	980	0	980
<b>New All Time Total :</b>		<b>17306</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17306</b>
<b>Congratulations on your promotion to 2 Star Master</b>				
Current year points brought forward		0	0	0
Current year points just registered		1150	0	1150
Total current year points		1150	0	1150
Your Competition category is 2 Star Master				





The Rugby Bridge Club winning team in the Warwickshire league.

So we moved to Spain and found the nearest club just outside Alhaurin de la Torre in the Resort Sol Andaluz designed as a luxury apartment complex set up as a residential health spa, with swimming, pools, restaurants, bars and a large theatre and full nursing facilities. We had to join TAPAS, the Theatre, And Performing Arts group and I got involved in stage set painting while we were there. Unfortunately politics split the group up and we had to find our own club and moved to a the Carolina restaurant in Alhaurin el Grande but weren't made very welcome, having to wake the family up to open the room for us . So we then moved to a lovely little venta just outside Laura golf called La Porrita, a small family run restaurant

with a separate room for us to play bridge and some lovely local food. Their speciality was Pul Pul Galician style, that's a specific type of octopus, very tasty when cooked properly.

This was called the Alhaurin Bridge Club, ABC and run by Jeremy and Maureen Rittenner who refused to be called tournament directors, only board handlers. This has been run now for at least 15 years. A very sociable and friendly club in the club house of Alhaurin Golf . Fay has taken on the role of treasurer and I'm the stand-in "board handler" when Jeremy and Maureen go away for a break.

The ABC club is now quite settled and I had been volunteered to set up a U3A bridge activity back in 2007 and so now I had to find a venue for Thursday mornings for a class. We started in las Alberqueres a funny little venta run by Mad Miguel, quite a character and we started off with about eight to ten for a class but soon outgrew ourselves. Everyone had to be a member of the U3A (University of the Third Age) a UK based set up and they had to pay a small annual fee while volunteers ran the classes. There were a wide choice of activities from painting to walks, book clubs to garden clubs.

So I now became what the Spanish call a "profesor" or teacher (unpaid) and it is still running and becoming quite popular with between seven and eight tables every Thursday morning, with breakfasts and drinks taken throughout the morning. I had to set up bidding boxes, baize table cloths, cards and design and print off "travellers" score sheets that went into each board after each play which was then passed on to the rest of the players, duplicate bridge but without moving. The U3A paid all my expenses so I wasn't out of pocket especially for printer cartridges to print out the score sheets every week and a training brochure which I later

used to complete my third book, "Common sense bridge for beginners".

The problem was finding a venue and like the ABC it became difficult to try and please everybody and also to keep up with the constant change of landlords in each venue. After las Alberqueres we moved to the Miralamonte venta, run by Pepe and his family: son Marco and daughter Monica. Pepe was reknown for his barbequed steaks. It was a popular venue for my bridge class and also Monica brought her Salsa class along one evening while we were there with Trevor, Lorraine and Shaelyn. There was a little stage in the front and it was balmy summer evening as Lorraine took the stage followed by Shaelyn who stole the show. Pepe also ran some concerts in the back garden and Mike Stirling who played the Phantom of the Opera in London's West End did a couple of shows which were very popular and a great night out as it included a meal for ten euros, sitting outside in the sun enjoying the music and then a disco afterwards.

Unfortunately Pepe downsized and my bridge class had to find another venue. The Miralamonte venta was taken over by Robert who owned a restaurant in Malaga along with a couple of Rolls Royces and Bentleys and some pigs. He had difficulty with the local council and planning permission so the bridge class followed Pepe to his new place in La Trocha and we were there for several years.

I understand that the landlord put up the rent at Pepe's and he moved so I had to find another venue and we found a place in the Cross in Coin opposite Mercadona and stayed there for a Xmas lunch which was a disaster as the two lads who rented it ran off with the takings and the poor woman who had to take it over and do our lunch really didn't have a clue so we

were on the march again and tried a venta in Sierra Gordo, just the other side of the motorway from La Trocha was called Leslie's but had changed hands. We settled in there but had to use the front conservatory and when winter came we were told by the son of the people running it that we had to move because they didn't have room inside.

So once again looking I had to look for somewhere else and we moved but found out later that the son did not have the authority to kick us out and they wanted us to stay but by then it was too late as we had already moved to Los Arcos on the old Cartama road to Malaga run by Eva. Somebody described her as "hormonal". I would describe her as a big blousy blonde who took us on under duress as Thursdays were her day off but she looked after us, it wasn't exactly a Michelin star restaurant but by this time we were beginning to feel like gypsies and glad of a place to rest our weary boards and bidding boxes.

Then of course there were the Christmas lunches to organise. That was a bit of a nightmare, a bit like herding cats, trying to get everybody to choose a menu and of course looking for a venue. Pepe always looked after us but since then finding a decent place with reasonable prices is a nightmare.

We have some new found friends who we met at one of Marion's soirees in La Cala: Carol and Gary who have since moved from Calahonda up here to Coin and together we have a regular restaurant outing with a critique to follow and one of the places we went was Las Anforas in Alhaurin el Grande. This had been recommended to us especially the prawn cocktails and pigs cheeks. So off we went one Friday evening and were told those items were only available at lunch in a menu del dia. We were the only ones in the restaurant

that night but the food was excellent and so it got recommended to our bridge group. I called and negotiated a deal in my basic Spanish but was informed by one of our bridge friends that the restaurant could take no more than twenty covers.

This was in 2023 and so with only a few weeks to Christmas I went into overdrive to find a new venue. One of our group mentioned the garden centre just down the road who had just opened a cafe, so in the middle of the class I dashed off down there and found a ideal place for us and made a tentative deal. I rushed back to the class and put this to them. We were running out of time so it was accepted and then I had to cancel the booking in Las Anforas.

Using the full extent of Google Translate I sent a message off cancelling the booking only to get a reply informing me that they could take up to *forty* covers. Oh shit! The first thing I did was to promote the person who had misinformed me to President of next year's Xmas lunch committee!

Apart from pulling all of what's left of my hair out, there are some benefits of running these does. I sometimes get a nice gift from my class in the form of a gift voucher or in one year a really nice bottle of malt whisky, with the security clamp still on! The mind boggles! Anyway, I borrowed one of my class who could speak Spanish and ran around cancelling and rebooking our Xmas lunch.

One of the problems with moving to a new country is that it is full of bloody foreigners who speak different languages and it is very difficult to translate literally. The Spanish like to embroider and they like to use ten words when one word will do. They lay out

sentences completely differently to us stupid English. They put adverbs and adjectives in the wrong place just to confuse us and get more people into their language schools. And then there's the difference between *Spanish Spanish* and *South American Spanish* would you believe. Having said that there are local dialects to contend with as well. I went into a local shop in Coin the other day and apologised for my bad Spanish. " Mi Español es catastofico". One of the customers in the shop jumped in and said " no, su Coinese es perfecto!"

Now we'd just bought a new (different) car from an Italian salesman and so there was now a triple translation problem. We couldn't find any documents relating to the ITV (MOT) and he said that it wasn't necessary so when the appointed time came for the ITV we popped down to our local garage and asked the lovely Cristina to organise this for us and at the same time to do a service/oil change and check on any problems that could arise with the ITV.

However we found out that the car sales shop would do a service and full check up as part of the warranty deal so cancelled the garage service /check up and went down to the car sales shop. Their translation of a service was just a revision of the working parts of the car to fulfil the warranty. Therefore I had to go back to the garage and request a service and pre ITV check up. Cristina asked me for the *Ficha Technical* (log book) so I sent her the file I had on the PC. It was the old Nissan log book. So I walked down to the garage as part of my morning constitution and gave her the real thing. I then got a *whats app* back which I read as an

appointment for the ITV as the 20<sup>th</sup> November but in translation she was telling me the date I had to get the ITV done by.

By this time we were running out of time to meet the deadline and ITV appointments were fully booked for my date but Cristina managed to get one for Tuesday the 29<sup>th</sup> November and fitted me in for a service on the Monday before. I had a telephone appointment with the doctor to get the results of my last dermatology scan on the Friday before and then got a letter from the hospital for an appointment in Dermatology on the Monday. So I had to cancel the telephone appointment and rush down to the garage and explain to Cristina that I couldn't make it for the Monday service/check up . Her father Miguel was there and I told him the story and he said he would risk his life to ask Cristina to change the service to within 24 hours notice for the Friday with the following Tuesday ITV test in mind.

That Sunday we went down to La Cala for the Lions Christmas fair as Fay had been in touch with Anita, the Dutch lady with her husband John whom we met at Jannes and wanted to support the Lions. It was another sunny day, can't remember when it wasn't sunny and we took our Danish neighbours Keld and Lone down with us. We parked close to Butibambe Park as Lone had a disabled badge and went into the park, had a cup of coffee and met up with Anita and another Anita Fay knew through her "Spooks" activities.

We had a walk around the stalls and bumped into the Italian car salesman. I also had along chat with a couple selling their book about sailing round the world and picked up some hints on publishing on Amazon. There was a lovely tall lady on one stall selling rocks and I asked her if she was Dutch. She laughed and said I had guessed right but told me she had lost 6 cm in the last few years due to the gaps in her spine. She was at least 6 foot 4 inches which is 1.93 metres so must have been 1.99 metres, 6 foot 6 inches, a bloody giant!

We watched a band of marching drummers that had just been set up with the help of the Lions backing . They were fantastic, reminding us of our visit to the Mardi Gras in Tenerife and those brilliant drummers we saw there. I had a chat with their local leader when they had a break and he knew about the Tenerife band as well. It was a lovely day out and to add to that I had my blood sugar level tested as part of the fair and it was 111 which is below the danger level.

We also bumped into Rima from the Philippines, one of Anne and Stewart's neighbours in the La Noria apartment block. She was dressed as an Elf giving all the children rides around the park. We were getting a bit peckish by now so took a brief walk up the road to the Utopia cafe and had a very pleasant lunch there with spicy Wagyu beef burgers and an Albino Spanish Water Dog as a companion which Keld and Lone fell in love with.

The next day I went for my scan and then on Tuesday I took the car down to the garage for them to

take to the ITV station. Cristina introduced me to Miriam who was taking the car, and we checked the papers and I was asked for the *Permission to drive* document. I didn't know what the hell they were talking about so drove Miriam back home and with Fay we went through all the car paperwork and couldn't find anything resembling whatever a *permission to drive* looked like. Miriam couldn't speak any English and so we had to use the translate app on our phones to get a conversation going and eventually we contacted the car sales room and Miriam managed to talk to someone in Spanish and they found the missing paperwork. By this time we had missed the ITV appointment time.

This was when the translation bit became rather interesting now that the ITV was cancelled we all relaxed and asked Miriam in our broken Spanish how old she was. Forty she told us, she looked about twenty and then we discovered she was Miguel's wife but a few translations later we found out she was his girlfriend as Cristina was far too old to be her daughter. We were all in fits of laughter realising our misunderstandings of each other's translation, anyway I walked Miriam back to the garage and we drove immediately down to the car show room in Fuengirola and grasped the Italian salesman warmly by his testicles and was given the missing *Permission to drive* document. We were going to the Ace bridge club that afternoon so had to wait several hours and went and had some fish and chips on the sea front and tried to have a siesta on a cold iron bench and came 17<sup>th</sup> out of 18 in the bridge club.

When we got home I tried to assemble all the necessary documents for the car and found the *Ficha Technical* missing. Oh shit! So Fay and I looked everywhere for this missing log book and in the morning we had reasoned that Miriam had taken it back to the garage with her so I called into see Cristina on my morning walk but she was out so I sat down half way up at La Trocha and sent her a text. She came back telling me it was in the “carpeta” in the car. I rushed back home and lifted all the carpets in the car but found nothing. Again the translation was amiss as a *carpeta* is a wallet. We had looked there and informed Cristina. Look in the car door she replied. I had looked everywhere in the car before and gave up asking Fay to look for me.

Yes, she found it! I felt a right pillock and apologised to Cristina and informed her that I was going to get my eyes tested. So now we had all the paperwork and the lovely Cristina made us an ITV appointment the following day, Thursday my bridge class day so I had to beg a lift from Els the lovely Belgium lady to take me to the class and bring me home again. Fay had her history class that afternoon so she had to find a lift for that as well. The next day I took the car down to Cristina and by the afternoon it was back home having successfully passed the ITV. Phew! I don't know how that translates into Spanish.

## Xmas 2023

This was a mix of bridge parties and non bridge parties. It all started on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> December down at the Ace Club in Fuengirola. This is the Danish club which I consider to have one of the highest standard of bridge on the coast which I have already covered. It was now run by Jens, a Danish gentleman who lived on his own in what I can only describe as a replica of the Alamo. It had fortifications with old cannons in between the castellation and he collected old guns and it even had a old bell tower. His father went on Safari with the King of Denmark to Kenya and he showed me a picture of him with elephant tusks and I told him about my calligraphy for the 100 pounder club. The only clothes he seemed to have where a pair of old jeans and a sweat shirt.

So there were a good crowd of us from the Alhaurin club and I sat next to Ben was an Indian who was for a short time the tournament director at the Ace club. Ben was born in Kenya and was at school in Nairobi when I was there. He invited me to one of his barbeques with lots of his Indian friends from Kenya and I met this old Indian biddy who turned up in a Mercedes Maybach which is one of the most expensive cars in the world and she had her own Iranian chauffeur to boot. She was in the middle of opening up a hotel in Inverness. Ben had a hotel in Glasgow but had let his family run it now.

It was an interesting mix of people at this party and we sat down to a typical Danish meal of lots of fish dishes with pickled herrings, meat balls and pork scratchings with lots of cabbage and fortunately for me lots of frankfurters. Then after the meal we all sat down to play bridge and we managed a reasonable eighth out

of twenty four as there were twelve tables a sight more than our usual five or six at Alhaurin.

The next bridge party was for my U3A bridge class which was finally tied down to El Anforas restaurant in Alhaurin el Grande and we had thirty two arrive after our normal Thursday morning class. It was a lovely meal which included pig's cheeks and prawn cocktails in lovely surroundings and everybody enjoyed it and at the end I did my speech which pointed out that trying to work out the vagaries of the scores every Thursday afternoon had been studied by Neurologists as a cure for dementia but which I felt it as bringing it on. I was given an envelope as a thank you from the class and upon opening at home found Carrefour vouchers to the value of two hundred and forty Euros. I was flabbergasted and immediately showed my humility in a big thank you along with the morning scores.

That was that over with now we had the ABC Alhaurin Bridge Club dinner to contend with on the 18<sup>th</sup> December. This took place in lieu of the bridge on a Monday night at El Higuera restaurant in Alhaurin el Grande. This was one of our favourite restaurants and they didn't let us down and we were presented with the Annual Champion Pairs Award which we have now won in 2014, 2015, 2017 (tied) , 2019, 202, 2021, 2022, and 2023 and we got a rather nice hamper as well which we haven't opened to date but full of lovely epicurean delights.

Last year we went over for Xmas with the family but found it so depressing and this year Trevor couldn't come over for the summer as his leg problem banned him from swimming so they decided to come over and stay with us for Xmas. They arrived on the twentieth of December. I had previously talked to Trevor about making a log store by the garage to save me walking up

the steps every time to get the logs for the fire in the Winter. I could get hold of lots of palettes free from the Carrefour trade entrance at La Trocha so had them ready for Trevor when he arrived. With this Carrefour voucher my DIY consultant advised me to buy a reciprocating saw and a press drill to help us in constructing our log store. We had outings to the ferotorias down the road in El Rodeo and with our new equipment started on the project, me doing the supervision obviously.

But meanwhile we had another Xmas lunch to deal with. This was the biggy. Janne's. Every Xmas Eve we would always troop round next door for a proper Danish Feast so we drove down with the family and Trevor was immediately involved in the cooking of the duck only after him and Lorraine and Shaelyn were given a guided tour of the beautiful house and the exotic cars and motorbikes. We met two German ladies Marianne and Ariane. Now Fay had already met Ariane who was also responsible for matching Janne and Dieter, she was incredibly interesting being a psychic medium and spiritualist and at one point in the evening had a little session with Trevor about his sore leg which did actually give him some small relief.

Sebastian was missing as he was working as a butler in a Swiss ski resort complex but we had the company of Laura who came down from her studies in Denmark. It was a lovely dinner in Janne's house which as usual was decorated to the gunnels and after the feast we played a game where everybody had to bring a small present wrapped up to hide it and they were all put in the middle and we all took turns in picking what we thought would be the best one. After every turn you could steal a present from somebody else until the game ended and you were allowed to open what you

had won or lost. It was a lovely night ending up with me making Irish Coffees for our German ladies whom I was told later from Janne had made me a strong favourite with Mariane.

That was Xmas Eve and now we had to deal with Xmas day. Unfortunately Trevor wasn't very well so we had to delay Xmas day for two days but did have our traditional salmon and scrambled eggs for breakfast. Trevor had asked for his usual Xmas beef joint and so we set about for another feast. The beef had been marinated for a few days and looked ready for cooking and I kept out of the way as the Yorkshire Pudding mix was made ready along with the roast potatoes and cauliflower cheese.

One of the reasons Trevor and Lorraine wanted to come over was to see the New Year's Eve party in Coin so the logistics for that had to be worked out as we had been invited for a bridge evening and dinner with Charles (ex Locking) and Mariapaz that night so I had to excuse myself from the bridge for an hour and take Trevor, Lorraine and Shaelyn up to the town centre and pick them up later at about half past one in the morning. The bridge party was another feast prepared by Mariapaz, a Glaswegian with a Spanish Mother so she could speak perfect Spanish and perfect Glaswegian unfortunately she wasn't so hot on bridge but her husband had been playing bridge probably longer than me starting in a duplicate bridge club the RAF in Bahrain.

So we watched the Spanish New Year on TV at midnight and then the UK party in London at one o'clock and we departed our friends and went to retrieve our family from the party up town. We had arranged to meet them at the bus station at one thirty giving plenty of time to enjoy the après party

celebrations. They arrived eventually making their way through all the revellers in fancy dress but without Lorraine. They had thoroughly enjoyed the night but had been parted from Lorraine and her phone wasn't working so we had a bit of a dilemma on our hands and decided to drive home hoping we would see her walking back. She was sitting on the front gate looking pretty dishevelled.



New Years Eve, Coin

We watched the revellers getting over their hangovers and had a day off ready for the next night when we had arranged to go out with Carol and Gerry. We had met them at one of Marion and John's parties down at La Cala and they moved up to Coin from Calahonda a couple of years ago and we helped them with all our local knowledge. They had both retired from the Metropolitan Police. He came from Surrey and she

came from Inverness so she fitted in well in the blethering club with Fay.

We had started a little restaurant critic group, introducing them to all the local eateries and had decided to give the Spanish restaurant in El Rodeo a go. They lived out a bit opposite La Trocha and had just finished pruning all their olive trees and taking them to the local press in Alhaurin el Grande and with the help of our neighbour Danny managed to produce nearly a hundred litres of olive oil of which we snaffled ten litres at fourteen Euros for five litres a go which was very cheap.

Unfortunately the Spanish restaurant was closed so we walked up the road a few metres and had a Chinese which went down very well with Trevor and Shaelyn extolling the virtues of the party in town on New Year's Eve. They had thoroughly enjoyed it and made friends with a couple from Newcastle and agreed to meet up with them next year.

The next night we had agreed to meet up for an Indian with one of our bridge friends Annie and her daughter Lucky with partner Allan. Lucky worked in Rugby so had a lot in common with Lorraine. Poor Allan who was a tree surgeon had fallen out of tree and hurt his back and had to end that career. They were an odd couple. Lucky being over six feet tall and Allan under five feet but a lovely couple, Lucky bringing me marshmallows every time we met. So we looked forward to another night out but then Christina and Antonia turned up in the morning and invited us round for lunch. We explained that we were going out that night but they insisted and so off for another feast. Fay and I know full well it would never be a small lunch and we arrived at Mercedes' house which was fully decorated for Xmas.

Pablo and Antonia lived at the end of our road across from the sports hall and they had bought the house diagonally across from them for Mercedes. They had done it up nicely but like all children Mercedes still lived with her parents to save money. As with previous Xmas lunches at the Ordoñez's the place was full of decorations and musical instruments so we had a pretty good idea how this "quiet" lunch was going to end. I managed to sustain some sobriety but Lorraine seemed to need to catch up in the entertaining arena and accepted all offers of wine etc and was soon joining in with all the dance routines and singing full set on then for the *party girl* title. I gave up half way through and tried out a sofa for a brief siesta which didn't last long before I was the centre piece for photos with dancing girls, not that I was particularly bothered, the Ordoñez daughters are not exactly what you would call ugly!

It took about half an hour to drag the party girl Lorraine and family out of the clutches of the Ordoñez hospitality just in time to get home, have a quick wash and brush up in time to receive our next guests Annie and Lucky with Allan. A quick aperitif and off down the road to the Indian for another feast. It was another lovely evening with good food and drink as if we hadn't had anything to eat or drink before. Lorraine and Lucky had a lot to talk about Rugby and we all enjoyed ourselves even Shaelyn cowering in the shadow of her *party girl* mother.

I drove the family to the airport the next day and said my farewells and breathed a sigh of relief. We recovered and got ready to give 2024 a go.



The "O O" families: Ordoñez and O'Farrells.  
Xmas 2023.

## EPILOGUE

The main reason for writing my memoirs was not to promote my bridge playing skills but for the love of our children: Trevor and Antony and their offspring. I don't want any unanswered questions once I have gone. My parents left me with so *many* unanswered questions. I know absolutely nothing about my mother and although my father left some faded brown photos I have no idea of what he was doing or where or when he was doing it. He travelled all over the world when travel was limited and was involved in both world wars and all I have left of him are some photos and some medals. He must have had an incredible story to tell, much more interesting than playing bridge but I can only guess at what he did.

I know from photos that he was an RFA Cadet in Cairo; in the Mashonaland hockey team; crashed a SE9 biplane somewhere in the desert; was a Wing Commander in the RAF in Canada; was a flying instructor in various flying clubs in the UK; was a teacher at my old preparatory school in Marchwood Park and that's about it. No sordid details. No details of what my mother died of. He married my step mum in 1950, but all we know of her is that she was in the Royal Observer Corps and took flying lesson from my father.

One of the reasons that I knew so little about my parents was that I was at boarding school most of the time or in the RAF, abroad, stuck up the top of a mountain, in Africa or somewhere in the middle of a desert. I was never "at home" anywhere, there was nowhere I could call my home town and thus I had no permanent friends. When we started a family we

decided that we would not let this happen to our children. Not that we could afford to send them to boarding school but we tried not to move about too much and made Lutterworth or main base. The boys only went to three schools in the town and so now have a base of friends they regularly make contact with. Antony who is now in Barcelona is still in touch with friends from Lutterworth but obviously now has local friends and those he made while in university to add to his list of permanent pals.

Fay has lots of friends in Scotland, from her days working in the telephone exchange who regularly keep in touch or visit us, but mostly on the phone. Thank God for *Whats App* as Fay can blether on cheap rate calls now an hour at a time. We have friends we made at Aylesbury who keep in touch and sometimes come out to see us, but I cannot say that I have any "old friends", the only ones I made in the RAF have either moved to Australia, died or in Cyril's case lost the plot completely. I could go to one of the RAF 90<sup>th</sup> entry reunions in the UK but am now totally committed to my life here in Spain. I still keep in touch via Face book with 75 "friends" but I doubt I will ever meet up with any of them.

At least I feel that we have achieved a base for our children and we have now got ourselves a home here in Spain with lots of friends both in the bridge arena and also local friends from all parts of the world who have settled like us under the sun and are enjoying the good life. It's a lovely feeling to get up in the morning and go and have breakfast in the sun overlooking your own swimming pool and pleasant gardens. When I went on holiday all I wanted was the sun, sea, a pool, and some local bars and restaurants . I've got all that with good friends chucked in for good measure. OK, so we have to drive thirty minutes to see

the sea, I can live with that and now just to keep the brain working I have a choice of several bridge clubs within half an hour's drive.

We've been nearly everywhere now in Spain: we've done Barcelona; Cadiz; Jerez; Madrid; Cordoba; Seville; Grenada and The Alhambra Palace. Now that was very disappointing: it was a great piece of Moorish architecture but it was empty. Where were the Crown jewels; the large family portraits; the suits of armour; the four poster beds; nada! That is one of the few things I miss about the UK, the stately homes, that and the London theatres. We nearly did Toledo as well but had to do the cardiology intensive care unit instead.

So now we have settled into a nice routine: on Mondays it's the Alhaurin Bridge club followed by a *patatas bravas*, *pollo crujiente* and a glass of wine at the garage as the sun goes down; Tuesday is a day off or possibly the Ace bridge club; Wednesdays is the Calahonda bridge club and sometimes a pop down to the coast for tapas ; Thursday is my bridge teaching day and we might fit in the Ace bridge club if pushed; Friday and the Calahonda bridge club if nothing else is on; Saturday is the Ace bridge club in Fuengirola again followed by a meal down on the coast somewhere and Sunday is a day off unless we have friends round for a bridge barbeque.

Rugby and tennis can overrule bridge sometimes when the Six Nations or Wimbledon is on or if we have guests or family. Chuck in sun, sea, sangria and señoritas and .....

.....what more is there to life!