

Chapter 1 – The Earliest Years

There comes a point in everyone's early life when one's own memory can actually begin to recall the events that have taken place. Things that happened prior to that point can only be recounted as a result of having been told of them by someone else. I cannot honestly say where that point was in my own life, that is to say, where my own memories begin. As a result, many of the earliest events written about here may well be an account of what others have told me.

Rhoda Evans and Thomas Stanley Gough, married on 19 September 1939 at Mount Tabor Methodist Church in Tranmere, Birkenhead just after the start of the Second World War. They came to live in a rented flat above a butcher's shop at 228 Bebington Road, Rock Ferry, Cheshire (now a Chris Pluck betting shop). He was a bus conductor and later a driver with Birkenhead Corporation Transport and she worked at Moody's Wine Shop. Oddly, he was always called Stan among the family but Tom among his work colleagues and this continued throughout his life.



In March of the following year Rhoda became pregnant but as the year wore on, the war affected the area more severely with regular bombing raids being carried out against the docks at Liverpool and Birkenhead.

Inevitably, many civilian areas were also hit. Rhoda's brother, Fred, saw his own fish & chip shop completely destroyed by a German bomb and this was only a couple of hundred yards from the Bebington Road flat. Consequently, as the date approached for Rhoda to give birth, her mother insisted that she went to stay with an aunt in North Wales as that was considered to be a much safer place.

Rhoda went to stay with her father's sister, Aunty Wilhemina (known to all as Aunty Minna) and her family at 3 Maesy-dre at the village of Gronant near Prestatyn and I was born there on Monday, 2nd December 1940.

All was not as peaceful as had been hoped, however. The German bombers attacking the ports on the Mersey were not having it all their own way and, as they were being chased off by British fighter planes, they would turn away across North Wales, dropping any remaining bombs in order to lighten their load and thus speed their getaway. One night one of these bombs fell in the field directly across the road from Auntie Minna's house. It was time to return home to number 228. I was now 3 weeks old.

The months that followed were difficult ones for everyone and many evenings and nights were spent huddled under the stairs while bombs fell outside. Every individual praying that they would not be hit. I would be carried down from the flat lying in a makeshift cot – a drawer pulled from a chest in one of the upstairs rooms. The wait for the siren to signal the "All Clear" must have seemed interminable. However, the three of us survived and we eventually moved to the living accommodation at Grandad's fish and chip shop, The Paragon, at 160 Bebington Road (which later became a branch of Victoria Wines and is now a bathroom shop). Mum's brother, Uncle Fred, & Auntie May moved in to 228 after we left. Some years later, when we used to visit Brian and John there, I remember Uncle Fred growing mushrooms in the dark in the cellar.

One day, soon after we moved to the chip shop, Mum took me in the pram along the road to a shop. She left me outside to enjoy the sunshine (you could do that quite safely in those days).

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Later on, back at home, Nana asked her, “Where’s Alan?” Mum nearly had a fit, realising that she had come home with the shopping but without me. She raced back to find me happily entertaining the other shoppers. I’m sure that would have been one of her more embarrassing moments.

It was while we were at 160 “Beb” Road that I began to gather my own earliest memories.

Dad continued to work as a bus driver and he was also a member of the local “Dad’s Army”, the Home Guard. I recall seeing him in his uniform and I have a quite vivid recollection of seeing him carrying a rifle.

It was while we lived here that my brother, Les, was born on 13th April 1944 at Clatterbridge Hospital. Apparently, I was the one who chose his name – Leslie – something for which he has never forgiven me. I went to stay with my Nana and Grandad (Mum’s parents), Robert Owen and Daisy Evans, who, I think, were then living with Mum’s brother, Eric, at his house at 11 Oaklands Drive just a short walk from the shop. While I was there I wrote my first letter (probably with a little help). It was to Mum at the hospital and it told her “I have got a big egg”. 9th April had, after all, been Easter Sunday.



While we lived at the shop I started school. First it was Church Drive Infants in Port Sunlight at the age of about 4½, followed by Church Drive Juniors from about 8 until I was 11 and a bit. There were a couple of nearby neighbours living round the corner in Barlow Avenue who were about the same age as me, Russell Sparkes and Robert someone. I believe that it was Robert’s dad who actually owned a car (possibly the only one in the neighbourhood) and he regularly drove it in the Monte Carlo Rally which was a much more amateur event in those days. I recall the walk from home across the road and under the railway bridge by Bebington Station, along Greendale Road then, by any one of several routes, across Port Sunlight village past the majestic Lady Lever Art Gallery and the boating lake to the school. Among my best friends there were David Cousins, who lived at 36 Shore Drive, and Eddie Curtis, who lived in Winstanley Avenue, New Ferry. There were times when I believed that we really were the Three Musketeers.



There was one particular morning, it must have been in the very early days, when Russell, Robert and I came home and were found playing in the entry at the back of the chip shop by my Mum. I think that we honestly thought that it had been “going home” time but apparently it had only been mid morning “playtime”. So we were given the necessary telling off and taken straight back to school where the teacher was waiting for us. She just took us from Mum and brusquely waved her away, ushering us back into the classroom. I can’t remember whether or not that day gave me my first taste of the cane, something with which I was to become quite familiar over the next few years.

Living behind and above a chip shop had its advantages. I used to come home for dinner most of the time and sometimes, when I was about to go back to school, Grandad would give me a small bag of chips to eat on the way. It’s a wonder I didn’t turn into a right puddin’. I loved the chip chopper that was behind the counter in the shop but I was only allowed to use it if I was being supervised (i.e. not often). The potatoes first used to be loaded into a sort of rotating drum that whirled them around and sort of peeled them. They were then brought into the shop where they would be picked up individually and placed in the chipper. This consisted of a metal base plate of criss-cross blades like a large noughts and crosses grid. Above that was a handle fixed to a solid plate. When the potato was placed on the grid with one hand and the handle was brought down with the other, the potato was forced through the grid and out came perfect chips. I was reminded of this machine later in life when I was playing one of the original one-armed bandits in a pub. The action was the same but the result was very different. The chips fell into a bowl below ready for frying. Great fun and I felt that I was part of the team.

Sometimes on a Saturday or Sunday morning after I had finished my breakfast I would walk round to see Nana and Grandad and Uncle Eric. I often managed to time it so that I arrived as Grandad was having his breakfast of porridge. Nana would always put a bowl out for me too. It tasted sort of special knowing that it was some of Grandad’s.

Whenever we visited them during the afternoon as a family, it was always very quiet. Sometimes Nana and Grandad and Mum and Dad would doze off for a while and Les and I had to play very quietly. I think lots of youngsters from that era can identify with the silence except for the slow, hollow tick tock of the clock on the mantelpiece at their grandparents’ house. Later on when Dad was back at sea (more about that later) he used to bring home blocks of pipe tobacco for Grandad who used to sit and carve it off into slices using his penknife. He would then shred the slices and fill his tobacco pouch. He kept all of his bits and pieces in the shelves that formed part of the wooden arms of his favourite chair.

I don’t remember visiting my Nannie and Grandad Gough as often as Nana and Grandad Evans. They lived at 76 Town Lane, Bebington. I understand that Grandad, Thomas William Gough, who I used to call “Diggie Grandad” for some unknown reason that can only be guessed at, was a bit of a well-practiced drinker often seen tottering out of local pubs. He had his special chair in the front room at 76 and if I ever sat in it I was always reminded that it was “Grandad’s chair” and I would have to move if he came home.

When I was still quite young, probably under ten, Dad took me to see Grandad who was then in Clatterbridge Hospital. I was not allowed into the ward to see him so when Dad came out he took me round to a window and lifted me up. I saw Grandad and waved to him. He waved back and that was the last time I saw him. He died shortly afterwards. I have not yet been able to confirm his date of death but will continue to research when time allows. (*I have since discovered that he died on 8th June 1947*).

He had been a train diver on the underground train from the Wirral to Liverpool under the river and the story goes that he drove the first train to travel non-stop from one end to the other carrying the dignitaries when the line was opened. Dad reckoned that Grandad probably holds the speed record for the line as it has probably not been driven the full length non-stop since that day. Grandad Gough later worked as a crane driver at Cammell Laird's shipyard at Birkenhead. He has always been a bit of an enigma. Even Dad knew very little about his father. I did manage to discover that in 1901, aged 27, he was a lodger with a family called Rigby at 93 Woodcroft Road, Wavertree, Liverpool. At that time he was working as a stoker on the railways, a particularly dirty and strenuous job. Later that year he married their daughter, Florence, then aged 20, who would eventually become my Nannie Gough.

As a result of research I obtained a copy of the marriage certificate of Florence Maud Rigby to Thomas William Gough at the West Derby Register Office in Liverpool on 28th September 1901. Grandad's father was shown on it as Thomas Gough, a deceased stonemason. However, a birth certificate for a Thomas William Gough, which I strongly believe relates to Grandad, shows his mother to be Jane Gough but there is no father's name shown. Interesting.

The Port Sunlight schools were recognised as being strict but having an excellent record in the 11+ exams, which were the route into the local Grammar Schools at that time. The headmaster of the Junior School was Mr Byron and one of his best teachers, who I was lucky enough to be assigned to, was Mrs Thomas. She spent hours with us rehearsing our tables until they became second nature. She recognised that these were the essential foundation to the future study of mathematics. Spelling and handwriting were the other skills that we spent hours practising. I wouldn't want to sound as if it was all work though. There was plenty of time for games, singing and creative skills such as art and crafts.

The playground at the junior school was sunk well below the level of the surrounding roads and was edged by a high wall topped with railings. In summer we would play cricket with stumps painted on the playground wall and in winter it would be football. There were all the usual seasonal games as well such as marbles, conkers and I can even remember a spell when a whip and top was the most popular pastime. We would colour the tops with chalk designs and you could really get those things to spin by whipping them with the leather thong on the end of a short stick. Five stones (known as dibs when we later moved South) was another favourite. In the winter the playground would be criss-crossed by slides created by lines of boys scooting one after the other across the frosty or icy surface. Each traverse making the slide longer and more slippery ready for the next boy. Winters really were winters in those days (or is that just my selective memory?). It was a good job that "Health & Safety" hadn't been invented. We all learned a lot then about risks and danger and how to avoid it. That seems to be something that today's youngsters are shielded from, to their eventual cost I would suggest.

Each year on 24th May, along with all other state schools in the Commonwealth, we celebrated Empire Day. We dressed in our cubs, brownies or Church Lads Brigade (CLB) uniforms to go to school. There was a special assembly and we then marched in single file past the Union Flag on the pole outside the school and each one of us stopped and saluted the flag before returning to our classrooms. (The significance of Empire Day waned as Britain's enthusiasm for "The Empire" itself did and in 1958 its name was changed to British Commonwealth Day. Today the celebration is known as Commonwealth Day and is observed annually on the second Monday in each March)

Christmas was always an exciting time at school, as I imagine it is for most children. One particular Christmas, the junior school held a party and fancy dress competition. I dressed as a pirate complete with eye patch and a cardboard parrot fixed to my shoulder. I curled my left leg back at the knee and walked using an upturned broom as a crutch. This earned me second prize. I was so excited that I have no idea who won first prize or even what the costume was.

Other classmates of the period who I remember were Neil Richardson, David Markham (son of the Vicar of Port Sunlight Church), Allan Buchanan, Roger Merrick, Peter Clegue, Brian Hough and Tony Marsh. Among the girls, the only ones I can remember are Meryl Wharton, Barbara Jennings and Mary Chandler (but mainly Meryl Wharton!) I suppose the penny hadn't really dropped at that early stage that girls had a positive side.

One day, I recall that a netball match was organised to take place between the girls and some of the mothers in the girl's playground. We were all allowed onto the grass bank at the side of the girls playground to watch this epic event. Our Mum even played in the match but I'm ashamed to say that I don't remember any detail about it. I never understood then why they didn't have a boys v fathers football match. That would probably have been much more attention grabbing. In retrospect I suppose it was because all of the dads would have been at work whereas in those days, most Mums stayed at home and were therefore available to play. No such thing as careers for the girls.

My biggest problem at Church Drive was that I would keep on getting caught talking in class and in those days persistent offenders were given the cane by the teacher. The cane that was used was about 18" long shaped like a walking stick. It was held by the curly end and brought down with a thwack (or frequently, several thwacks) onto the outstretched and upturned hand of the offender. There were all sorts of hints from every quarter as to how one could lessen the effect (those of us who received it called it pain) of the strike, such as buckling your hand in the centre or dropping the hand ever so slightly just as the cane came down. None of this worked of course, and the sharp pain didn't diminish to a tingle for quite some minutes.

I managed to get away without my parents finding out about my canings for a long time until one day when I was caught doing something I shouldn't (I can't remember what it was) by a teacher from another class. I had to go to that teacher's classroom for the cane and this time there were a couple of my cousins, Sheila and Brian, in the class. So the game was up and the story was out. Mum and Dad were not at all happy with me. After that, if I complained that I had been wronged, Mum always said, "You must have deserved it."

Did any of it do me any good? Well, although I was a repeat offender in some ways, I am sure that I went on to my next school a better-behaved youngster than the one who had arrived at Church Drive and I know for certain that it did me no lasting harm.

In fact, on 29th June 1953, I returned to Church Drive School for Speech Day where The Right Honourable The Viscount Leverhulme himself presented me with the book, "Tales From Shakespeare" by Charles & Mary Lamb for Merit in Class 8. I still have that book and have read from it on many occasions over the years. I notice that a pencil note inside the front cover indicates that it cost 5 shillings (that translates to 25p today).

There were other things I recall about our time at the chippie. There was the monkey belonging to the man next door (who I don't think I ever saw). It used to sit in a tree over the

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wall in their garden. Also, we had an air raid shelter in the back garden. It was really just a hole in the ground covered with a sheet of corrugated iron that was in turn covered with soil and grass. This type of shelter was called an Anderson Shelter and a description and photos can be found on the Internet at :- <https://www.andersonshelters.org.uk/>

I saw American soldiers going past in a convoy of lorries and planes fighting overhead. I don't remember it as being a dangerous time though. Probably too young to understand what real danger was.

I have since found out that I lost two uncles in the war and nearly lost a few others as well (including Uncle Fred and Auntie May when their chip shop was bombed). Uncle Harold, my Dad's brother was apparently one of the first from Bebington to die in action. For four and a half years, he had been an Able Seaman in the Merchant Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. He was called up for active service in August 1939. On Monday, 13th November 1939, while serving on the minelayer H.M.S. Adventure, he was killed in an accident along with a number of other crew members. He was 23 years of age and had been due to marry his fiancée, Florence England, the following Christmas.

The following notes describing the accident were written by Donald Hodges, a member of the crew of H.M.S. Adventure at the time, and have been obtained from the internet.

We eventually ran out of mines at Immingham and on 11th\12th November 1939 left the Humber to return to Portsmouth to collect another cargo of mines. Owing to very thick fog we had to anchor off Grimsby and again further South getting under way again in the early hours of the morning of 13th December (this should read November – AG) with the ship closed up at action stations. At about 6.30 a.m. there was a violent explosion - we had encountered an acoustic mine in the swept channel which had been swept overnight for traditional mines. This was probably off the Essex coast. The damage was enormous and we had about 100 casualties out of about 400 crew, including about 30 deaths. In the TS (Transmitting Station) we were quite close to the point of the explosion. I was blown out of the earphones I was wearing at the time and had a crack on the head caused by a plotting table I was in control of rising less slowly than I did. It was unpleasant. The lights had failed and oil fuel was spraying up from the fractured tank below us. I managed to tie a handkerchief around my head to keep this from getting in my eyes. After a struggle and with help from Bill Cornelius who came looking for me at the TS I managed to reach the upper deck. With his help I was put aboard the escort destroyer which came alongside to pick up the wounded and was ferried to the RN Hospital at Rochester (Chatham Command). It was a day or two before I realised that I had been blown out of my glasses - which were missing and a couple of days before I stopped being sick through swallowing a small amount of fuel oil.

Harold's body is buried in a grave maintained by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Bebington Cemetery.

That was near the very beginning of the war then at almost the end of the war another uncle was killed in action. That was Ron, my Mum's brother. Ron died when the glider carrying him and his tank crashed at Hamminkeln, Germany on 24th March 1945, only a matter of weeks before victory in Europe. He was taking part in Operation Varsity. The following description of the operation was taken from the internet.

In the early morning of March 24th 1945 a force of 440 gliders of the Glider Pilot Regiment towed by 440 tug aircraft of the RAF, took off from airfields in Southern England. Their contribution towards the invasion of Germany was to capture and hold the town of Hamminkeln along with three vital bridges over the River Issel. Their loads included 3380 troops of the 6th Air Landing Brigade, 271 Jeeps, 8 Locust Tanks, 2 Bulldozers, and more than 50 Anti-tank guns with ammunition.

Due to concentrated anti-aircraft defences and the drift of the smoke screen covering the land offensive, six miles away, many of the gliders failed to reach their allocated landing zones. Of the 402 gliders which reached the battle zone, 37 were destroyed by fire and only 88 remained undamaged. 102 glider pilots were killed (42 GRP and 60 RAF) and 102 wounded, most of these casualties occurring within the first 55 minutes of the battle. Many of the tug aircraft of 38 and 46 Group RAF were also shot down or damaged with the loss of 43 aircrew killed and 153 wounded.



"Varsity" was the largest airborne operation in history and has been described as the most successful.

Ron was a tank driver, probably in one of the Locusts that carried a crew of three, the Commander and Loader, the Gunner and the Driver. Ron's body is buried in The Reichswald Forest War Cemetery in Germany, a serene area containing the graves of 7,579 Commonwealth servicemen of the Second World War.

Another uncle, Mum's brother, Eric, had a lucky escape when, as a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy, his ship was torpedoed and sunk. Although I don't know any of the details, he survived.

Either during or just after the war Les and I were issued with ration books for sweets. Each Saturday Mum would take us along to the confectioner's shop a few doors away to buy our allowance. We would pay over our pocket money of 6d a week (2½ p) and the shopkeeper would cut out a token from the ration book. Shopkeepers in those days all carried a pair of scissors for this purpose on a piece of string hung from their belts. There wasn't a great deal to choose from, toffees, mint humbugs or boiled fruit sweets was about it, but to us it was a real treat. Another treat, which I don't recall repeating once we moved away from Bebington, was to go to the local chemist shop to buy a liquorice stick. This was like a piece of twig, about 5 or 6 inches long, which we chewed and from which we sucked the juice. By the end, we were left with a stringy, floppy piece of dross which was thrown away.

The mention of Ration Books has reminded me that I heard somewhere that during the Second World War the only food that wasn't rationed was fish 'n' chips so I guess that running a shop selling the stuff meant a very busy workload.

As a bus driver, Dad worked out of the New Ferry bus depot and his route often brought him past the chip shop where we were living at the time. Occasionally, if I was home from school, he would stop his bus outside the shop and I would run out with his dinner on a plate with another plate over the top to keep the food warm. I would also bring him his tea in a white enamelled tin flask with a small white enamelled cup lid with a blue rim. I would ride with him on his bus to the depot and would sit with him in the canteen while he had his meal. He would then drop me off at the chippie again on his next run.

One birthday, or was it Christmas, Mum & Dad bought me a three wheeled bike. It was second hand of course but Dad tarted it up with a new lick of paint, blue obviously, (Dad was an Everton fan) and to me it was easily as good as any new one. I used to ride it up and down outside the shop whenever I got the chance. One day, another boy, some years older than me, stopped me and stood astride the front wheel facing me. He looked quite menacing and asked, "Is this your bike?" I said that it was and he produced a knife and slashed a cut across the front tyre before running off. What on earth that was all about is anyone's guess. Anyway, it was fortunate that the tyres were not pneumatic but were solid rubber so the cut didn't affect it too much. In my mind's eye I can still see the cut in that tyre today. Funny how these little events stick in the memory.

Mum, Les and I used to spend a lot of time with Auntie May and Brian and John, and Uncle Fred when he was off. We would often go on trips with them at weekends or during the school holidays. We would get the train from Bebington station, just across the road from the chippie, and head off to Chester or into North Wales. Bus rides were also a frequent treat. Always on the top deck, and it was a real bonus to get the front seats. Loggerheads, Moels and Hoylake were also favourite trips as well as rides on the ferry across the Mersey.

If we went to New Brighton, the route was served by the Number 11 bus. Then, the Birkenhead buses were all blue but the Wallasey buses were yellow. Both companies ran on the Number 11 route and we always hoped that the bus we were to catch would be the yellow one. Sometimes we were lucky, sometimes not.

There was lots of walking done too. A favourite place to visit in the spring was Dibbensdale near Raby Mere. We would pack a picnic and all head off into the countryside past the duck pond at the junction of Church Road and Spital Road, stopping to throw a few crusts to the inhabitants. Sadly the pond was filled in about 1950 and houses were built on the site. Anyway, we then walked on to Dibbensdale. Here we would park ourselves on the grass next to the woods and while the Mums were getting the picnic out, we boys would run off into the wood returning a short while later with arms full of bluebells. Once again the place where we picnicked was eventually lost to us. Not to housing this time but to agriculture. What was once a grassy meadow became a field of cabbages. But Dibbensdale and bluebells will remain a magical memory.

Chapter 2 – Up Until 1952

Shortly after the war ended, probably in about 1946, we moved to one of the new prefabs being erected for the Corporation between Heath Road and Kirkett Lane about a mile away. We had seen them on lorries going past the shop. They were prefabricated in a factory somewhere and brought to the site in sections where they were put together. They were being erected all over the country at that time and the intention was that they were to last 10 years following the destruction of the war and until more permanent dwellings could be built. In lots of ways they were much like today's mobile homes. They had a well equipped kitchen with a cooker, larder, washing machine (with a mangle) and even a small fridge. Now, there weren't many people who could boast a fridge in those days! The lounge was a good size and ours accommodated a three piece suite, a dining suite and even a piano. There were two good sized bedrooms and a family bathroom. There were plenty of cupboards and drawers built into each bedroom and the kitchen. One drawback was that these were all metal so were inclined to stick. The window frames were also metal and condensation could be a problem especially in the winter. Even so, they each had a large garden as growing your own vegetables had become a necessity throughout and following the war years. Dad used to grow potatoes, peas, runner beans as well as fruit bushes. I used to enjoy "podding" the peas (and pinching a few in the process).



Our prefab, identical to the one shown here, was at 54 Abbotts Avenue. The two windows on the right were the lounge and the one on the left was mine & brother Les's bedroom. There was a field at the back, beyond our garden, and a large front garden containing a pond and a very large oak tree. The footpath from Kirkett Lane ran alongside. During the season, the pond was full of frogs making a din and the Corporation eventually came and drained it and filled it in.

Unfortunately, this had the effect of also killing the oak tree which had to be chopped down. That did make things much lighter for us indoors of course but I believe that there were those who thought that we were responsible for killing the tree.

The walk to school became a bit longer than it had been from the shop but it was nonetheless interesting. Down Kirkett Lane and past St Andrew's Church on the right. I heard a story once that someone had seen a monk walking past the church. "So what?" you ask. Well the story alleged that the monk was not walking *on* the pavement but about one foot above it and that he eventually disappeared through the boundary wall. The person telling the story had done some research and had found out that the footpath used to be about a foot higher than it now was. Not only that but there had apparently been a monastery on the spot and there had been a doorway into the building at the very spot where the monk had disappeared. How much truth there is in this tale I cannot tell, but it makes for a good story doesn't it?

Opposite the church at the junction between Bebington Road and The Wiend was a seat made from a large log. This had a roof on it. The log was, even then, well polished with the

number of bottoms which had rested on it over the years. It was always a bit of a landmark and it is still there today, even more polished no doubt.

At the bottom of The Wiend the road passes under the railway bridge and into Greendale Road, one of the main roads forming a boundary to Port Sunlight village. Crossing Greendale Road there were a number of routes through the village to Church Drive School, past the bowling green or past Mac Fisheries and The Cenotaph. Often, on the way home from school, I would stop for a while to watch the men playing bowls.

A journey into Birkenhead was made on either the 50 or 52 bus from the stop opposite St Andrews Church, or on the 64 from Heath Road. The 64 passed Tranmere Rovers football ground and just along from there was a large building site. This was the first time I had seen a building being constructed using a framework of iron girders. Apparently I referred to it in my ignorance as “knitting”. Once completed it became, I believe, Birkenhead Technical College.

Dad was always an immaculate dresser. He used to have suits, and later, his merchant navy uniforms, made by a tailor in Grange Road, Birkenhead by the name of Hymie Jacobs. I used to accompany him when he went to be measured and again when he went for fittings. I thought they were making mistakes when they produced a half-finished jacket covered in tacking stitches then they started drawing lines on it in tailor’s chalk. The finished products were, of course, first class.

Along the road from Jacobs’ was a department store called Allansons. Their name was written large on the paving at the front of the shop and that was one of the first words I learned to read. I can remember the dark wooden floors and the air tubes by which the assistants sent the money to the cash office in cylindrical missiles about the size of a baked beans tin.

One Sunday in November, probably about 1951, I went with Dad to Hamilton Square in Birkenhead for the Remembrance Sunday service and parade. I was still quite young, probably about 9 or 10 and I think Dad wanted me to understand something of what it was all about. I did enjoy the bands and the military march past. The thing I remember most, however, was that it was bitterly cold and my feet were so cold they became really painful. I was glad to get back home.

Pantomimes in Liverpool, either at the Empire or at the Royal Court Theatre were a regular annual feature to look forward to. One particular year we saw George Formby as Buttons in Cinderella. The Evanses were in a box at one side of the stage and we Goughs were in the box at the other side. We were the butt of some jokes by Buttons – being in the ashtrays etc - although he didn’t, of course, know that we were related. Peter Pan was another magical story that we all looked forward to seeing occasionally.

When Les and I were young we were taken on the most wonderful holidays any young lad could imagine. By today’s standards they would be regarded as extremely basic but just after the war, most youngsters didn’t go away for holidays at all or, if they did, it was for a week or maybe two. We went away camping for the full six weeks of the school’s summer break. We always went with Mum, Auntie May and Brian and John. Dad and Uncle Fred would come and join us for their own couple of weeks leave.

The first time must have been in the summer of 1947. I was 6 and Les was only 3. This was shortly after the end of the Second World War and the two families bought some Army Surplus equipment. Two large low brown tents for sleeping, two taller pale green tents for cooking and eating in, wood and canvas camp beds, primus stoves and Tilley lamps. These were fuelled with paraffin. The first year, Dad borrowed a lorry from a neighbour and he drove it to Gronant loaded with the equipment accompanied by me and the lad next door whose dad owned the lorry. Mum gave me a load of sandwiches for our lunch. We were to set the camp up in a field that had been arranged by Uncle Fred.

While Dad finished setting up camp, I got the butties out and to my horror I saw that the first packet I opened were bacon. Now, I didn't like bacon so I swapped them with the other lad who had tomato sandwiches. I did like tomato ones. We tucked in and eventually Dad came over and asked where his sandwiches were. You can see where this is leading can't you? I had given his ones away. I was not at all popular. The ride home in the lorry was a very quiet one.

The two families went out to the camp by train the next day and we stayed there for six weeks. Gronant is a very small village near Prestatyn and the field was very near to the house where I was born. I don't remember too much about that first camping holiday. Except that one day I went with Tommy Evans, Auntie Minna's son, up the hill past their house where we found a tree bearing hazelnuts. We picked some and broke the shells open with his penknife and ate the nuts that we found inside.

Also, there was a tiny corner shop next to the pub. It was run by an old lady, May Owen, who was confined to a wheelchair. She remembered me being born at Auntie Minna's.

Something else I remember was that there was a cow in the field where our tents were and it had had its calf taken away for some reason. It spent what seemed like the whole holiday howling and we guessed it was missing its baby. The farmer had put a sort of metal mask on its face, perhaps to hide the fact that its calf had gone. Because of this it had difficulty in seeing where it was going and we had to put a stout rope right around our camp about eighteen inches high to prevent it from stumbling into our tents.

In the summer of 1948 we went to Aberffraw for the first time. That was our favourite place and I think I probably speak for all of us. Aberffraw is a small village on the South-West coast of Anglesey. Our camp was in a field next to the shore, about one and a half to two miles from the village. There were two farms, each with its own farmhouse, but sharing the same farmyard. Mum paid the Roberts family and Auntie May paid the Owen family.

We went there three consecutive years, it was that good. The six of us used to travel there and back in a local Bebington furniture lorry with all of our kit. On arrival, apart from erecting the tents and putting the camp beds together and setting up the kitchens, we had to erect a toilet tent containing the Elsan bucket. One of the less agreeable tasks was digging the pit on the far side of the field where we had to empty the Elsan every now and again. What a foul stinky job that was. And we all had to take our turn.

We also had to get water. Now even that wasn't as straight forward as it sounds. You see, there was a fresh water spring that came to the surface on the beach, which was of fine grit. We first of all had to dig a hole about two feet square and a couple of feet deep which would, over a period of about half an hour, fill with water. We had to let the grit settle for a while but

the water was as clear as could be and it tasted fine. Trouble was, this was about 200 yards from the camp so we did a lot of carrying buckets of water and that was the lads' regular jobs.

We got our milk from the two farms and as we had no refrigerator it frequently went off. The breakfast cereals often tasted a bit strange as a result. Not to waste the older milk, we waited until it became a bit lumpy and Mum would put it into a muslin sack and hang it up to allow the whey to drip out. Eventually we were left with the curd which, when flavoured with a bit of salt, was a very tasty cream cheese to have on bread and butter.

We had no transport and the nearest bus ran from the village so we did lots of walking. We often complained about the amount of walking we had to do especially if we had to carry our heavy gabardine mackintoshes on a dull or showery day. However, we did enjoy those holidays so much and we learned a lot about entertaining ourselves as well as about duty and responsibility and how to cope with problems.

We knew that, when it rained we must not touch the inside of the tent otherwise the canvass would leak. There were occasions when the weather became so ferocious that one or more of the tents acquired a tear, usually in the middle of the night. Mum and Auntie May became dab hands at doing running repairs in the dark and in the middle of a storm.

We would gather mushrooms, as many as we wanted, from an adjacent field. There seemed to be new ones there every morning. We also caught lobsters in the rock pools on the beach using a pole with a long metal hook on the end. We would poke that around in the crevices and the lobsters would grab hold of the hook and we could pull them out. Another free meal could be caught from the rocks at the Southern end of the beach, past the cave. Mackerel were plentiful here at certain times and whitebait could be scooped up in an old baked bean tin with holes punched in the bottom to allow the water to drain out. Pollock was another fish that occasionally appeared on the end of Uncle Fred or Dad's line.

This all sounds pretty good doesn't it? Trouble was, at that time it wasn't just bacon that I didn't like. I also didn't like mushrooms, mackerel or lobster. The pollock I could manage. Funny how your tastes change over the years isn't it? As well as the things I've already mentioned, I used to hate liver, kidney, cabbage, cauliflower, parsnips and probably lots of other things long since forgotten. All of these things I eat and enjoy now. Wonder what changed. I think that some of the reasons may be connected with school dinners. For example, the liver at school always seemed to have grisly tubes running through it. One thing I did used to eat when I was young was tripe sprinkled with pepper and vinegar. I haven't had that for probably more than fifty years. Not sure that I'd enjoy it anymore, especially knowing what it actually is. Still, back to Aberffraw.

In the bay there was a church that, at high tide, was surrounded by water. There was a causeway to it from the beach but you had to make sure of the tide time before venturing out to visit it. It was used once a year for a service, something I think it had to do to retain its licence.

Although we always referred to it as Aberffraw, that was in fact the name of the nearby village. I have more recently discovered that the actual name of the area near the beach was Llangwyfan. It was originally built in the 12th century and is dedicated to the Irish St. Kevin who founded a monastery in County Wicklow.

Across on the far side of the bay was a cliff on top of which was an army artillery range. They would often fly a target past towed by a plane and the troops would practice shooting at the target. One day they managed to completely shoot the target free of the plane and it gently floated down to the beach. The farmer John Owen was out there like a shot. He saw the target's potential as a waterproof cover for one of his haystacks. Finders keepers so to speak.

The Roberts family had two young children, a boy and a girl. They used to run about everywhere without any shoes on, even over the sharp stones on the beach. The soles of their feet were probably as tough as our shoes. One of Dad's favourite things when he came to join us for his fortnight's leave from the ship was to make us each a kite. These he made using cane, which he split into about four lengths, newspaper and flour paste. He created the kites in a diamond shape and with a long ball of string and a tail made of twisted pieces of newspaper on a string. They flew like a dream. They were always great fun to play with. Soon after John Owen found his new haystack cover, the Roberts kids came over and asked Dad, in their rich Welsh accents, to "make us a target Mr Gough" meaning a kite. He obliged of course.

Dad also kept us well supplied with colouring books and "Classic" comics from the States. Stuff that wasn't available yet in the UK. These kept us happy on the wet days.

In 1951, the Aberffraw camp ceased to be available for some reason but Uncle Fred and Uncle Eric had discovered a small farm on the outskirts of Conway where we could go. We went there twice in our usual style in the back of the furniture lorry. Here we set up camp at a loop in a stream that ran through the farm. We shared the place with two horses, a brown one that was very docile and a completely mad grey called Berwyn. Berwyn would often come thundering down the slope towards our camp from the field above. Then, for no apparent reason, go belting back up again. We were a bit nervous of him.

In the stream we would catch eels but it would not have been wise to eat them as the stream ran down from a lead mine a couple of miles further up the valley. Les was particularly good at catching them but he had to call for Uncle Fred to take them off his hook. The shouts of "Uncle Fred, I've got another one" were almost constant. The farmer here kept beehives and he kept us supplied with fresh honey. Delicious.

Again we had no transport of our own so walking was what we did best. We would occasionally go on a bus trip for a treat. I can remember vividly the evenings spent at the quayside in Conway watching the fishing boats unload their catches. Sometimes there were displays of folk dancing and an ice cream was always a nice bonus. Then the long walk back to camp with the sun going down, arriving back in the dark to clean our teeth and get in to bed exhausted. Bliss.

While at the Junior School I took and passed the 11 plus exam that I mentioned earlier. The result of this exam determined whether a child would go on to a Grammar School or to a Secondary Modern School. I had the choice of Wirral Grammar School or Caldy Grammar School. However, I then took entrance exams for both Birkenhead High School and for Chester King's School. Passes in both of these were followed by interviews, my first experiences of what I found throughout my life to be a bit daunting. Even so, I was accepted for both schools and chose to attend Chester King's. Also through with me were David Cousins and, I think, Neil Richardson and Allan Buchanan.

Alan Gough – Life Story

We used to travel to Chester by train from Port Sunlight station, a journey of about 30 minutes. There was then a 15 minute walk from Chester station to the school which was located at the cathedral. There was also an annex a short distance away at what was known as The Bluecoat School. The journeys to and from Chester were a bit of a nightmare. One of the stations on the way was Capernhurst, the site of the building of some sort of nuclear project. The workers from the building site would join the train and eject us from the compartment we were in. They were really intimidating to an 11 year old.

Sports afternoon was every Wednesday and the whole school used to travel by bus to Lache Lane on the outskirts of Chester where the school's own playing fields were located. After football we then had to make our own way back into Chester to catch the train home. What a long day Wednesdays turned out to be.

Chapter 3 – Itchen Grammar School Days

I had not been at King's five minutes when Mum & Dad decided to move to Southampton.

To rewind slightly - a while earlier, in 1948, while driving his bus in Rock Ferry, Dad had met up with one of his best old school friends, Fred Green. Fred had rejoined the Merchant Navy after the war and he encouraged Dad to do the same. After some thought, Mum & Dad decided it would be a good idea (the thought of a rise in pay from £2.15s to over £7 per week did the trick) and as a result Dad rejoined the Cunard Line in Liverpool. He sailed first on 3rd March 1948 as valet to the 2nd Steward on RMS Franconia making 2 six week voyages from Liverpool to Bombay via the Suez Canal followed by one of 21 days to New York and back. He was then transferred to a brand new ship, RMS Parthia, as fruit storekeeper making regular 21 day voyages between Liverpool and New York.

On sailing day, Mum, Les and I would ride on the ferry from Woodside, the landing stage at Birkenhead, across the River Mersey to the Pierhead at Liverpool. Dad's ship was normally berthed close to the end of the ferry pontoon so we were able to see Dad on the bow of the ship and to wave him off as the ropes were let go and she got underway. It was a day of very mixed feelings for me. Excitement at the prospect of the trip to Liverpool and to wave to Dad, but sadness that he was going to be away for, what seemed to me to be, ages. That sadness was always tempered on his return, however, when he brought back lots of presents of colouring books, comics, sweets and ice cream. Many of those things were in very short supply or even not available at all in this country for several years after the end of The War.

He later became Lounge Steward and Librarian until, 12 months later, he was asked to join RMS Queen Elizabeth at Southampton. This meant 5 fortnightly trips to New York followed by a trip off. He was away for ten weeks at a time, hence the decision to move to Southampton.

The two local councils, Bebington and Southampton arranged for a straight swap with a family living in an identical prefab at Weston and during October or November 1952 Mum moved, taking Les with her. I stayed with Uncle Eric and Nana & Grandad at 11 Oaklands Drive, Bebington until the end of term at Christmas. To be honest I was glad to see the back of King's School. I had the feeling of being a second class pupil as I had only got in through an exam success whereas most of the other boys had come through the Prep School and were being paid for by their parents.

The move was incredibly easy by today's standards. The two prefabs were, as I said, identical and it was really a matter of rolling up the lino and having it taken with our few bits of basic furniture and our clothes to Southampton, where it was all put down in the same position as it had been in up North.

Even at that age I was aware that there was a perception in some people's minds that the South was more advanced than the North. There were differences, of course. The climate was generally better in the South, in fact I hardly believed it when I first experienced a winter with no snow. But there were plenty of less advanced things that really surprised me. One was having our milk delivered by a horse pulling a cart. That seemed to be very behind the times. In those early days in Southampton, Brown and Harrison's Dairy had many horses drawing milk floats around the town. Our horse was called Gipsy. He (or she) knew exactly where to stop for each delivery and for how long. The milkman didn't seem to need to give any instructions.

Also, for quite a few years after our move to Southampton, the bottom end of East Street near to the Central Hall, was still being lit by gas lamps. A chap used to come by on a bike and pull on a chain at the top of each lamp post using a pole with a hook on the end to turn the lamps on and off.

Another difference was, of course, the accents and the words used. The Southampton accent always seemed to me to be a lazy one. For instance, the phrase ‘Got it’ would usually be pronounced as a guttural ‘Go- i-’ the ‘t’s having been dropped. Also, some of the grammar used was different and, to my mind, was incorrect. For example, Southampton people say things like, ‘He got off of the bus’ instead of ‘He got off the bus’ and ‘Where to do you catch the bus?’ instead of ‘Where do you catch the bus?’ All of this soon became normal and I too started to inherit many of the Southampton ways although I hope that I still retain a little of the Bebington accent and grammar. Initially, if I spoke about a jam buttie, I got some quizzical looks but nowadays everyone knows what that is. I guess that TV has a lot to do with that. A passageway at the rear of a row of houses was known up North as ‘the entry’ whereas in the South it is called ‘the alley or alleyway’.

Maintaining contact with the family up North was not that easy for Mum & Dad. Along with most other families at the time, we had no telephone at home. Uncle Fred and Auntie May did, however. They were now living at 1 The Nook in Chester and had Nana and Grandad living with them. We would go to a local public phone box, usually on a Sunday, and telephone them to catch up on the news from what we still sometimes called, ‘Home’. To do this we had to go through an operator. We first dialled ‘O’ then the operator would ask us for the number we wished to be connected to. Once connected, she would ask us to put some coins into the payment slot before she told us we could go ahead and we were able to chat to the person at the other end. On replacing the handset at the end of the call any unused coins would be returned by dropping into a tray.

Public telephones in those days had heavy bakelite handsets connected to the box by a plaited fabric covered cord. There were two buttons marked ‘A’ and ‘B’ in the front of the case. You first of all inserted your money then you dialled the number you required (if it was a local call). Once the person answered at the other end you had to press button ‘A’ in order to speak to them. It that point the coins dropped into the coin box. If there was no reply you pressed button ‘B’ and your money was returned. Most youngsters would never pass a phone box without going inside and pressing button ‘B’ in case there was some money to be returned. Occasionally you would be lucky but not very often.

From time to time we would return to the North for a holiday and to visit the family. Initially, we travelled by train. The journey took six hours. The train was dependable, leaving Southampton Central Station every day at 10.30am and arriving at Chester at about 4.30 pm. We would usually be met by Auntie May with Brian and John and we would then walk the half mile or so from the station to The Nook carrying our suitcases. I don’t know how on earth we all crammed into their house but that’s exactly what we did.

Eventually, Dad started hiring a car from Woolston Garage for the trips back up North. The car was always a ‘sit up and beg’ style Ford Anglia or Prefect. There was a tiny boot and comfort was almost non-existent by today’s standards but that was normal then. We obviously couldn’t have taken much in the way of luggage. The journey took all day as there were almost no by-passes and the route took us through lots of towns and villages. It certainly helped us with our English Geography.

By the time I first arrived in Southampton just before Christmas 1952 accompanied by Nana and Grandad, Mum and Les had already become very knowledgeable about the local area and knew their way about well. Les had been attending Weston Park Junior School, which was only a stone's throw from home at 27 Scott Road, Weston. The prefab backed on to the tennis courts at the Mayfield playing fields and it was in those playing fields that Les and I spent a good deal of our free time over the next few years playing football and cricket.

In January 1953 I went, with Mum, to Itchen Grammar School to be enrolled. Outside the Headmaster's room was another boy with his Mum. I guess we were both a bit nervous. It transpired that he was also about to enrol at Itchen. He had originally failed his 11 plus and had been attending Merry Oak Secondary Modern School for one term. He had been reappraised and it had been decided that he should be attending Itchen. So at least we had something in common. We were both joining a term later than everyone else. We have remained friends ever since and still get together quite regularly. His name is Eric Bennett. He used to come back to our prefab after school sometimes to play table tennis on our dining room table (with the leaves pulled out). Mum always remembered him because he always played wearing his school cap.

Itchen was a far cry from King's, not least because it was co-educational. The whole atmosphere was more comfortable. I started off in the middle class, 1B, of the first year. Following good exam results at the end of the year I moved up into 2A then 3A, 4A and 5A. Then it was time for the O Level exams. I didn't do too badly, I got six out of seven, English Language, Maths, Geography, French, Chemistry and Physics, failing in Biology. I decided to carry on into the sixth form to study for three A Levels in Pure Maths, Applied Maths and Physics.

There were lots of sport and after-school activities such as the woodwork club and the gym club. I used to enjoy football, cricket, athletics and gym and inter-house competitions were always pursued with great vigour and enjoyment, if not always bringing success.

At one point we even started a boxing club at lunchtime. One of the caretakers, a small chap was an ex-boxer and he offered to train us. In one of my first fights I caught a good one on the nose and it bled and bled. It wasn't so much the pain as the mess it made of my vest. When I got home I had no option but to declare it to Mum and she hit the roof. "How am I supposed to get that out now it's dried and set?" She suggested I packed in the boxing. Well it was more of an instruction than a suggestion. I got the message and gave it up. After all there was plenty of other stuff to be involved in. I became the cricket and football captain for the Crusaders house but we didn't do too well in the inter-house competitions. I even played football for the school's first eleven a couple of times but I was much more at home with the second eleven.

During the summer holidays, when I was about 14, a crowd of us would go to the Lido, an open-air swimming pool in Southampton. It used to get quite packed especially when the weather was hot. There was a bloke with only one leg who used to go there regularly. He would climb effortlessly to the top diving board and could do the most perfect swallow dives. Everyone would stop what they were doing to watch him perform.



GYMNASTIC DISPLAY: FÊTE DAY, 1956.

I'm the one on his head in the centre of this photograph.

I couldn't even swim and would be left behind by my mates who had all mastered that particular skill. Eventually I decided that enough was enough. I struck out for the fountain in the centre of the pool where I knew that the water was too deep for me to stand on the bottom and still have my mouth above the water. It was a brave move but a necessary one. Success! I made it. Then I realised that I also had to get back. I was completely out of breath so I clung on to the fountain for a good ten minutes before I set off again on the shortest distance to where my feet could touch the bottom. Once I had done this for the first time my confidence improved and I was swimming along with everyone else in no time.

My favourite sport was athletics, especially the long jump and high jump. We were all crap of course when compared to today's scientifically trained youngsters but we really did enjoy ourselves and that was the most important thing. I even did quite well once at a hurdles race and I found myself entered in the Southampton Schools Championships at the Sports Centre where I came a reasonable 2nd or 3rd. The following year I was entered again so I invited my girlfriend, Sue (who I'll tell you about in a moment), along to watch. Well this time I came right at the back end of the field. That'll teach me to show off. I did, at least, get a certificate for coming second in the under-17 long jump final but she wasn't there to see that!

On the run up to one Christmas, I think it was probably 1957 or 1958, our P.T. Teacher, Mr Pooley, (did you notice I called it P.T. – Physical Training, not P.E. – Physical Education as it later became known), decided that it would be a good idea if our age group learned a bit of ballroom dancing. So one of the gym lessons each week was devoted to the waltz, quickstep, foxtrot and samba. To be fair it did go very well and we all had the favourite girls that we like to dance with. This was usually nothing to do with fancying them, it was a fact that you could dance better with some than you could with others. My favourite dance partner was a tall slim blonde called Jennifer Earle.

One day, several weeks in to the lessons, Jennifer was absent and everyone else was teamed up with their partners. Pooley told me to waltz around on my own with my arms held up as if I had a partner. Of, course, I became the subject of lots of ribbing. I have always blushed

very easily when I get embarrassed and this was a case of major embarrassment. I must have been the brightest red ever and the sweat was running down my face and my shirt must have been soaked. The upshot was that I told Pooley that I wasn't going to look like a fool anymore and I stopped dancing and sat at the side of the gymnasium. He became angry and sent me to the headmaster's office where I got a small ticking off but nothing too serious.

At the end of term, I took my teachers' report home for Mum and Dad and when they opened it, there was a comment from Pooley that said that I "had performed well with the exception of one particularly rude incident." Well, Mum and Dad were not at all pleased, in fact they were extremely cross with me. I tried to explain but, to them, the teacher was always right.

As it happened, the following Easter I was due to travel to Switzerland with a party from the school for a holiday and we had already been making payments towards the trip for many weeks. Once they received Pooley's comments, Mum and Dad decided that I could forget about going on the Switzerland trip. I was heartbroken.

On my return to school after the Christmas holidays, I had to report to the Headmaster that I was being withdrawn from the trip. He asked me for the reason and I told him. To his credit he wrote to my parents and invited them to meet with him at the school. Dad was away at sea but Mum met the Head who explained that he felt that the punishment didn't really fit the crime so to speak and that my rudeness hadn't really been that serious. Fortunately, Mum and Dad relented and I was eventually able to go to Switzerland.

The holiday itself was great. We travelled by train from Southampton Central to Waterloo, then from Waterloo Junction to Dover and on to the ferry. On the other side of the Channel we boarded a French train which took us overnight across France, through Germany and into Switzerland. We arrived in Lucerne sometime during the morning and we then took a ferry across the lake to a small village called Weggis. A walk of about a quarter of a mile took us to our hotel.

I was roomed with a couple of mates, Mick Boyle and John Vingoe. We were there for about 8 (or was it 11?) days travelling to Zurich, Interlaken, up several mountains, through several tunnels and across many lakes. The weather was perfect and the views were absolutely stunning. In the evenings we learned to play whist and we were treated to concerts by local performers. For the trip we were each allowed to take £5 in pocket money. When I arrived home I got off the train at Southampton with just 2½ pence in my pocket. That equates to one pence in today's money. It was a good job that Dad was waiting for me with his car otherwise I would have had to lug my case all the way home.

During our time at the prefab, I took to making model aeroplanes as a hobby. Dad had a shed at the end of the garden and I would go in there to build my planes. They were made from kits using balsa wood and covered with tissue paper which was then coated in a clear liquid called "dope" to shrink it onto the framework. I would then paint it using a coloured "dope". My first plane was a Chipmunk. It had a propeller that was driven by a long elastic band that ran the length of the fuselage. I would wind the prop round and round until the band was tight, then I would launch the plane into the air. It would fly for several seconds before gliding back to earth.

I made several of that type of aircraft. Then later I progressed to a plane which used a "Jetex" engine. This was a small cylinder fitted to the fuselage into which you inserted a pellet of

solid fuel with a fuse. Once that was lit the plane would fly powered by a “jet engine”. Great fun.

I was always interested in making things. One of the favourite birthday or Christmas presents was a Meccano set. That was a sort of engineering kit consisting of various metal strips and plates having a series of holes. These could be fitted together using nuts and bolts to create cranes, vehicles, ships and a whole host of other exciting things. Meccano was a favourite boys’ toy of that period and it was always a thrill to open a present to find that you had been given the next size kit as that would contain new parts enabling you to create many new models.

At some time before 1959 Mum and Dad decided to move from the prefab and to bite the bullet by buying their own house. Dad was still at sea and everything was left to Mum to arrange. She was always better at the administrative stuff anyway and Dad wasn’t as enthusiastic as Mum with the prospect of saddling themselves with such a huge debt. However, during Dad’s periods of leave they looked at a number of properties including bungalows at Park Gate and they eventually settled on a new two-bedroomed semi-detached house at 78 Church Road, Woolston. The journey to school was about the same distance.

While we were still at the prefab I had started a paper round working for Tom Sperring whose shop was at Montague Avenue in Sholing. There were three Sperrings, Tom, Fred and one whose name I cannot remember. They all had newsagent shops and were not known as good payers, but a job was a job. I was doing mornings, including Sundays so there was an early start every day except Bank Holidays.

I later managed to get a job at Moore’s Newsagents in Bitterne Road with the help of my classmates and friends, Eric Bennett and Mick Boyle, who already worked there. That job was regarded as the cream. It was very well paid, about 30 shillings a week, for which we did mornings, Echos and Sundays, including magazines. They were large rounds too so the bags were really heavy but they did supply you with a bike with a large tray on the front. My round took me along Commercial Street, Balaclava Road, part of Yeovil Chase, Wynter Road, Westend Road and Cutbush Lane.

A while after I started at Moore’s, Russ Biggs started. We knew each other from school and he was going out with Liz, Sue’s sister. His round ended at Hatley Road and Westend Road so he used to walk his round then I would give him a lift back to the shop sitting in the tray of my bike, hoping that we wouldn’t get caught either by the Police or the boss.

I was able to save up enough to buy a new bike, a sporty job with dropped handlebars. Soon after I acquired that, in August 1958, my cousin, Brian, and I decided to try Youth Hostelling. We planned a route around North Wales starting and finishing at his home at The Nook in Chester. The Youth Hostel Association has changed a lot since those days. Then, it catered for young people providing cheap accommodation in dormitories with a dinner and a breakfast in return for help with carrying out chores. When you arrived at a hostel and registered you were allocated a bunk, we probably took turns at having the top one, then you were told what jobs you had to carry out. Sometimes it was potato peeling or vegetable preparation or maybe it would be dormitory cleaning or such like. In the morning, once you had had a breakfast and had completed your tasks you could carry on to your next venue. Very different from today’s Youth Hostels with their en-suite bedrooms and family rooms.

From Chester, we cycled to our first night's stop at Corwen via Wrexham and Llangollen. Then it was on past Bala Lake to Dolgellau. Our third night was spent at Harlech at the foot of the castle, then came the hardest day of the tour. After leaving Harlech we rode to Beddgelert where we stopped to gather ourselves before the long uphill ride past Snowdon to the top of the Llanberis Pass. From the top it was, as they say, downhill all the way into Llanberis itself. We stopped here for two nights, walking the footpath to the summit of Snowdon and back on the second day. Unfortunately it was a very dull drizzly day and we saw nothing in the way of a view at any stage of the climb, but we did it and that was very satisfying.

On leaving Llanberis we had planned to ride to Caernarfon where we intended to catch a ferry across to Anglesey. We remembered the ferry from our camping days at Aberffraw. Our plan was to revisit Aberffraw and to relive some of our camping memories before returning to the hostel at Bangor. However, when we arrived at the quayside near the castle we discovered that the ferry no longer existed. There was nothing for it but to cycle to Bangor and cross the Menai Straits by the suspension bridge. It added a lot of miles to the day's journey but it was worth it and we achieved our goal.

From Bangor the next day we rode along the coast road to stay our final night at Colwyn Bay before returning to Chester. When we arrive back at The Nook, I realised that I had left my bicycle pump in the bike shed at the Colwyn Bay hostel. The following day, kind Uncle Fred drove Brian and me back to the hostel to retrieve the pump. Altogether we cycled about 350 miles with an average of about 50 miles a day.

Itchen was where I met Susan Mary Sainsbury. At the time it was a cause of much talk among our school friends. After all, I was 18 and Sue was not yet 16. On 19 February 1959 and I, along with several mates had organised a School Dance with the purpose of raising funds for the maintenance of the recently built outdoor swimming pool. This was probably the third such dance we had organised so we were becoming quite slick at it. The headmaster, Mr Sid Thompson, had given his blessing for the events so long as certain conditions were adhered to, such as no alcohol, no smoking, a certain number of teachers to be present throughout etc. At the end of the event, I walked Sue home – it was, after all, on my way! She said that I smelled of cucumbers. That was probably the aroma from the Noxema cream that I was using on my face to tackle the usual teenage zits. Dad used to bring it home from the States. From that point on we started cycling to and from school together and eventually visiting each other at home, although it has to be said that Sue didn't come to our house until a much later date. Her Mum and Dad were really kind (I'm not sure that I would have been that kind years later to any 18 year old boy wanting to go out with our 13 year old daughter, Lindsay). Coincidentally, Sue's Dad was also a bus driver so we even had that in common.



From the age of 9 I had been taking piano lessons. My first teacher, Madame Lucy Coker, started me on the road through pianoforte and theory examinations while we were still living in Bebington. When we moved to Southampton I carried on my lessons with Miss Fay Labram, firstly at her home in Spring Road on the hill up from Miller's Pond, and later, when she moved to a flat above Hayton's shop in Bitterne Road opposite the Red Lion pub on her marriage. Lessons were on a Friday evening and although I missed seeing my mates who were all out doing other, more exciting, stuff, it certainly paid dividends later on. I continued to take the exams until I was about 15. I didn't practice as much as I should have done but I still did OK. Mum used to come with me when I entered music festivals such as the

Southampton one which was always held at Central Hall and the Gosport one. It must have been a bit of a pain for her having to sit through 20 or 30 youngsters all playing the same piece time after time. Also, with not having any transport of our own we were totally reliant on the bus, even for Gosport so that made for a very long evening. I took my last music exam in March 1957. It was Grade VII and I passed with 111 marks out of a possible 150.

When I was about 15 or 16 I discovered the secret of playing by ear (to a degree). The first song I ever played that way was “Robin Hood” closely followed by “Davy Crockett”. I don’t think Madame Coker or Miss Labram would have been very impressed. Their styles were very different, much more classical. However, I suppose that I was fortunate in that I have always had a very wide taste in music and can enjoy pieces from pretty well any genre.

It was about that time when Les started to play the drums and Mum and Dad bought him a snare drum and hi-hat cymbal. Together with Dave Hallett, a friend from school, on guitar, we started a group playing rock ‘n’ roll. I played guitar and piano. We used to go to a room above the Red Lion pub in Bitterne to practice one night a week. Although we used to enjoy ourselves, it didn’t last long and we only played publicly once or twice at the Merryoak Drill Hall. Still, it got me noticed and I was soon approached by a group called “Brian Fisher and the Strangers” who asked me to join them as a piano player. They were one of the big groups around at that time and I took it as a great compliment to have been asked. I accepted, of course, and started to rehearse with them on Sunday mornings at the Royal Pier. The line-up was Brian Fisher – vocals, Tony Collier – lead guitar, Brian Oram (Funnel) – Bass guitar, Roy Bridle – drums. Roy was later replaced by the late Brian Ferguson (Fergy). My first appearance with them was at Fawley Social Club and it was the most amazing feeling to play in front of so many people and to see them all really enjoying it. The very first song we did that night was “Down The Line”, a Jerry Lee Lewis number that I had never heard before. However, Rock ‘n’ Roll music is such that musicians can get together and “jam” even when they haven’t played together before. As long as you have the feel for the music you can join in quite seamlessly. During the next three years or so I sat in with many of the local bands. That first night though, it wasn’t long before a fight started on the dance floor and, although we kept on playing, everyone’s attention was elsewhere. As it turned out, this was a fairly regular occurrence at some of the places the lads played, but after this one, Fawley club stopped holding the dances.

The group were based at the Royal Pier in Southampton and we were managed by Len Canham who was also the Pier Manager. Len lived in a flat over the Royal Pier entrance. He had a number of other groups in his “stable”, the Hi-Fis, the Three Stars, the Blackjacks as well as The Brooks Brothers, Tex Roberg and several others. Dances advertised as “Teenage Party Nights” were held at the Pier on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Len also provided groups to play at Winchester Lido and Windsor on Fridays, Walton-on-Thames and Salisbury on Saturdays as well as other venues. So we always had plenty of work. As members of the Musicians’ Union we were guaranteed a good rate of pay – something like 35 shillings per evening (£1.75p) as I recall. I can remember a couple of weeks when we actually played 8 dates. For example Sunday - Shirley Warren Working Men’s Club; Monday – Portsmouth; Tuesday – Salisbury; Wednesday - Royal Pier; Thursday – Trowbridge; Friday - Ryde, Isle of Wight; Saturday morning – Southampton’s Gaumont Cinema before the kids picture show then Saturday evening - Walton-on-Thames.

Meanwhile, back at school, I was busy passing only two of my three A levels, Pure Maths and Applied Maths. Unfortunately, I failed the Physics. I really should have done a lot more

Alan Gough – Life Story

work. Still, I was having far too much fun and anyway, life did turn out well for me in the end.

Chapter 4 - London

Towards the end of my schooling I began to apply for jobs. There was nothing much in the way of careers advice at school but I knew that the area I wanted to get into was engineering. So, to that end, I attended a number of interviews with large national companies based in various parts of the country. Metropolitan Vickers in Manchester and Guest, Keen & Nettlefolds in the Midlands were the main ones. The courses I was applying for were called Student Apprenticeships and they consisted of a year in the factory followed by three years at university with a final year in the factory. I kept getting turned down on the grounds that the 2 A levels I had obtained (Pure Maths and Applied Maths) were only regarded as a single pass as they were both maths subjects. I thought that was very unfair but I plodded on.

I was eventually accepted by both Osram Lamp Works based in London and by the Water Department at Southampton Council. I chose Osram, who were part of the General Electric Company (GEC). I was to start at their factory at Brook Green, Hammersmith as a Student Assistant where I would work with other apprentices for six months learning metalwork skills such as drilling, lathe work, tool making etc. Digs were arranged by Osram with a local family. Unfortunately, just before I was due to start, the landlady was taken into hospital so one of the men working in the offices stepped into the breach and I began by taking a room with him and his family in Neasden until a more permanent arrangement could be made.

I travelled to London each Sunday evening and returned home each Friday evening. I used to hate those journeys. The Sunday one because the weekend was over, and the Friday one because it was just so very, very busy with everyone pushing and shoving on the tube and on the train. Very often on the Friday I would make my way, with my suitcase, to meet up with the Strangers for a booking before finally getting home.

After a few weeks, digs were found for me with an elderly spinster, Gladys Godbolt, who lived in Putney Bridge Road. There was another lad living there as well. We got bed, breakfast and an evening meal. I don't remember how much she charged but it did make a bit of a hole in my £5 a week wages. It was just as well I was earning money with the group which helped pay for my fares. They were good digs however, and the journey to work didn't take too long on the bus.

Sometime later while I was still living in Putney, I bought my first proper motorbike, a BSA 250cc from Lawton & Wilson's in Millbrook Road. The registration number was 758 CR.

I had not really ridden one before but I bought it on the Saturday (Dad came over with me) then on the Sunday I rode it to Putney. That went OK and I rode it to and from work each day that week then on the Friday after work I had to ride to Trowbridge to meet up with the other lads for what they now call a "gig". I had no idea how far it was and had to make lots of stops on the way to study the map but I got there in one piece. At the end of the do we came out and loaded up the van, a Bedford Dormobile, with all of the instruments and amplifiers and we set off in a convoy of two, van followed by motorbike. I still had no clue how to get from Trowbridge to Southampton. Unfortunately, it was raining cats and dogs and I could hardly see so I just made sure I kept the van's rear lights in view. The weather made the journey a slow one and it was really late when we got home, probably about 2 am. Mum and Dad were up waiting for me and, as you can imagine, were furious as well as being relieved that I was

alright. I must admit that I hadn't really thought about the stress I was putting on them. Not that I could have done much about it other than not go to Trowbridge. We didn't have a phone at home so I couldn't have contacted them. It must have been very difficult for them.



My First Proper Motor Bike – a 250cc BSA

One of the trials that every apprentice had to undergo in the workshop at Hammersmith, as at every other workshop in the land, was to be "enrolled" by the older apprentices. What used to happen was that every afternoon at about 3 o'clock, the older lads would start making their way to the toilet block. You knew then that something was about to happen. Then one of them would come out and tap the shoulder of one of the new boys and he would have to follow into the toilet block. Word went round as to what happened next and when it was my turn I was well prepared and knew that, in order to pass their test, I would just have to go along with it. On entering the block you were smothered in liquid soap then your trousers or jeans were pulled off and your head was shoved down the wc and the chain was pulled. It was all a bit of fun and it was a rule that the harder you struggled, the less distance away you would find your trousers. I must have done OK as my jeans were only just outside the door hanging on some heating pipes about 8 feet off the floor. The whole episode only took about 5 minutes or so. One lad wasn't so lucky and I did feel a bit sorry for him as he was a bit soft and he didn't really fight back at all. His trousers ended up at the other end of the factory and he had to go through the typing pool to get to them. Even the bosses knew what was happening and they used to shut themselves away in their offices for the duration.

Once I had finished my training at Hammersmith I was moved out to the firm's factory at East Lane, Wembley. It was like being in prison (I imagine) and my work was dreadfully boring. I used to do quality tests on the various lamps that were being produced, from normal light bulbs of varying wattages, to car lamp bulbs and to silvered spotlamps. I had to collect samples from various stages of the production line and subject them to tests such as drop tests then see how many would still light and how many were broken. One of the points in the line where I had to get samples from was as the lamps came off the gas flame which sealed the glass bulb to the metal base. At that point they were red hot and I had to wear an asbestos glove. Even with that on, my fingers used to burn and sometimes the glove itself used to smoulder. There was a research laboratory about 100 yards along the road. Every now and then something had to be taken to, or collected from, the lab and we, the trainees, used to fight over who would make the trip as it meant going outside the gate. Freedom, even for a few minutes, seemed very precious.

To start with, I travelled from Putney and back by motorbike until I could find myself digs more locally. That was a bit of a tramp. I then met an Irishman who worked in the same

section and who was about to move out of his digs at 57 Mostyn Avenue, Wembley. He put me on to them and I went to meet the landlords, Larry and Bella. Good job their surname wasn't Fonte! (Go on – try putting all three names together). Actually, I can't remember what it really was. They were Geordies and seemed alright. I was given a room that only had one drawback. Another lodger, a Greek lad called Christos Christakakos, had to pass through my room to get to his. Fortunately, he was an OK guy and we got on really well. His mother used to send him olives from Athens in an old 1 gallon Esso oil can. He loved them, I didn't.

Larry used to wear a support collar and was claiming some sort of disability as a reason that he couldn't work. However, he only used to put it on to go out and never wore it about the house. The house was at the top of a hill opposite and very near to Wembley Stadium. Whenever there was a midweek football match Larry used to go. But instead of walking the quarter of a mile or so, he would get his car out and drive there. It must have taken him ten times as long to get out of the car park after the match as it would have taken him to walk home.

The food wasn't of the best at these digs and Chris and I weren't welcome in the living room to watch TV in the evenings so we had to find stuff to do. Neither of us were flush with cash so we couldn't do a lot. Occasionally we would go to the greyhound racing at Wembley Stadium. It was a bit of fun and we would limit ourselves to 10 shillings (50p) for the evening. Sometimes we would just take the tube down to the West End and wander around. It was a good way to find where places were though.

When I returned after one weekend at home, Chris told me that Larry and Bella had allowed someone from their family to use my room. I could tell that the bedding had not been changed. This wasn't on as I paid for the whole week and I had left all of my belongings in there. So I put it to them and said that I wasn't happy about it. They just said that if I felt like that I had better find somewhere else to live, and they told the same to Chris as well for spilling the beans. Neither of us were that bothered and we set about finding somewhere else. In the meantime we saw that Bella and Larry had placed an advert in a local newsagent's window for 2 rooms to let. We went into the shop and told them that we had taken the rooms and that the lady had told us to come and ask them to remove the advert which they duly did.

I moved into digs with a widowed lady in Harrow Road. This was a big improvement with very nice meals. Chris moved to another place nearby where there were three other lodgers. We used to meet up round there in the evenings to play speed Monopoly. We were all in the same financial boat – HMS Skint. One of the blokes worked permanent nights and he would have to leave part way through the evening.

One day, I was off work with a heavy cold when there was a knock at the door. I opened it to find two men who identified themselves as Police, one from the local station and one from the Post Office Investigations Branch. They told me that the chap from Chris's digs who worked nights had had his Post Office bank book stolen and that the rest of us were under suspicion. They got me to do a stack of handwriting samples as the thief had withdrawn money from the stolen account. They then stripped my room searching for the bank book. The Metropolitan Detective was fine, quite polite, but the Post Office bloke was a real nasty piece of work. He kept telling me that my handwriting was the same as that of the thief and that I may as well admit it. Probably playing good cop, bad cop. Anyway, they found nothing, of course, but I was terrified as I had recently made moves to change jobs and I had already been accepted as a Constable in the Southampton City Police Force. I was due to finish at Osram's the following week.

That weekend I told Mum and Dad what had happened and on the Saturday morning we drove up to Wembley and Dad asked to see the detective involved. When he eventually arrived he explained that they were only trying to get to the truth and that, had they really thought that I was the culprit, they would have arrested me at my digs. Anyway, it was a most unpleasant experience but one which would help me later in my work as a policeman. I would be able to understand better what I was putting other people through.

I had been attending Acton Technical College on day release studying for an ONC in Mechanical Engineering and this was in fact one of the major disillusionments that I faced during my time in London.

When I was originally accepted at Osram's I was assured that I would be taking an HNC course. However, when I came to enrol I was told that because both of my 'A' Level passes were for maths subjects, they only counted as one pass (where had I heard that before?) therefore I only qualified to take the ONC course. I soon realised that this was a very big step backwards for me. For instance, in the maths lessons, we were studying the addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of vulgar fractions. This was something I had done many years earlier and the questions posed were very elementary and could be worked out in one's head. However, I was penalised because I hadn't shown the working out in my answers. Very frustrating.

I had many interviews with the Osram Personnel Manager about this but nothing changed and I came to the decision that I needed a change of job.

Chapter 5 – Southampton Police

During January 1961 I decided, following a conversation with Mick Fry, a policeman who lived two doors away in Church Road, Woolston, to apply to join the Southampton Borough Police Force. The entrance exams were fairly straightforward by today's standards and I had no bother with the Maths and English papers. Then I had to stand at one end of the large hall in the Hulse Road Training Centre to read a passage from a book in a loud and clear voice to the examiner, Inspector Mansell, who remained at the other end of the hall. There were no physical tests but I did have to visit the Police Surgeon, Dr Havard, at his surgery in Portsmouth Road, Woolston. As it happened, he was one of the partners at my own doctor's practice at the time. I took with me a form issued by Inspector Mansell that Dr Havard was to complete after examining me.

Well, the examination took the form of a single question. "When was the last time you had a medical examination?"

As it happened, I had recently been through a week's selection process following an application to join the Fleet Air Arm. I had passed the tests that had been put before us each day but failed to impress on the final day at the interviews and leadership tests. However, during that week I had undergone a very thorough medical and had passed with flying colours (excuse the pun). I told Dr Havard this and he simply signed my police form without any further ado.

The next step was an interview with the Chief Constable, Mr Alfred T Cullen, a tall, slim man who was stern in both his appearance and his manner. His piercing, grey, narrow eyes seemed to drill holes through your skull when he looked at you. You certainly had to take notice when you were standing in front of him.

After a discussion lasting about 15 to 20 minutes he came round from behind his desk and called me over to his window which was on the first floor of the Civic Centre immediately next to the steps leading from the street to what was then the Magistrates' Court. He looked out across Southampton's Central Railway Station towards the Western Docks and said, "I am responsible for policing all this and I want you to help me to do that." I took it that I had the job.

On Thursday 2nd February 1961, I joined Southampton Borough Police (later to become City Police) at the Civic Centre Police Station as Police Constable 250 for the obligatory two-year probationary period. I was taken to the General Office on the first floor next to the office of the Chief Constable Cullen along with the two other recruits, David Payne and Brian Burton. There we were introduced to PC Harry Langrish who typed out the inserts for our new warrant cards. He would later become one of my Uniform Sergeants and later still, my Uniform Inspector. When he handed me my new warrant card I pointed out that he had typed it on a form headed Sergeant instead of Constable. He said that that must have been a world record for promotion within the police service before handing me a corrected one.

The three of us were then taken into the Magistrates Court where, in front of the bench, we swore the following oath - "I, Alan Gough of the Southampton Borough Police do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that I will well and truly serve Our Sovereign Lady the Queen in the office of constable, without favour or affection, malice or ill will; and that I will to the best of my power cause the peace to be kept and preserved, and prevent all offences against the persons and properties of Her Majesty's subjects; and that while I continue to hold

the said office I will to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge all the duties thereof faithfully according to law."

We were then taken to Hulse Road and issued with our uniforms. In those days, the force had only recently gone over to jackets with lapels with shirt and tie. Prior to that they had worn the closed-neck tunics. The shirts were blue and had separate collars which were held in place with a stud at the back and one at the front. We had a couple of pairs of trousers and jackets, half a dozen shirts, two or three collars per shirt, a mackintosh, an overcoat, a thick cape, a pair of black leather gloves and two helmets. We had to provide our own boots for which we received a boot allowance.

To me the pay was brilliant. We started at £12 a week, £600 a year, about double that which I had been getting at Osram's by the time I left. Another part of the 'bait' was that after 17 year's service the annual pay would be £1,000 – WOW! Unfortunately, I did have to leave the band because, as police officers, we were not allowed to have any other job which may conflict with our duties as a police officer. Jumping ahead somewhat, issuing our pay was controlled by each Police Station's Clerk Sergeant. Once a week you would have to parade individually to him to collect your pay packet, notes and coins in a brown envelope. I recall that when they decided to pay officers by cheque instead of cash there was uproar as very few people actually had a bank account. We were forced to open accounts in order that we could cash our cheques.

Now to return to the story.

David Payne had been a purser's assistant on RMS Queen Elizabeth and Brian Burton had been a coal miner in Derbyshire. On Sunday 5th February 1961 we all travelled to No.6 District Police Training Centre which was located at Sandgate near Folkestone in Kent. We went by train to Waterloo then from Waterloo Junction to Folkestone where we were met, along with many other recruits, by a bus and taken to the training centre. This Initial Training Course was to last 13 weeks until 5th May.

On arrival at about 6 pm we were ushered into a classroom where we were given an introductory talk by Sergeant Will Squires. Sergeant Squires was a former guardsman who would be taking us for drill and first aid throughout the course. I remember the gist of his words well. He said, "While you are here you are going to receive some very intensive training in the law, both theoretical and practical. You will work through the day and also in the evenings. You will find it difficult, but remember this, if you throw enough 'shit' against a wall, some of it is bound to stick." He was absolutely right of course. I can even remember some of it today.

From there we were shown into the dining room for an evening meal. Each class had its own long table. There were six of these with a head table across the end of the room in front of the stage where the Commandant, his deputy and the rest of the staff would eat. There were three classes on each course and there were two courses taking place at any one time, a Junior Course and a Senior Course. Half way through the Junior Course, the Seniors would leave, the Juniors would become the new Seniors and a new Junior course arrived.

Our first meal was already on the table when we were shown into the dining room. It consisted of a pork pie and a blob of mashed potato. On seeing this, one of our number immediately turned on his heels and walked out muttering something about not putting up with this. He picked up his suitcase and left and we never saw him again. He was the first of

several who couldn't last the course for one reason or another. As it happened, the meals from then on were really good, a large breakfast, three course lunch and a three course dinner.

It turned out that most of the recruits were ex-service personnel who had recently finished their National Service in places such as Cyprus, Aden and Malaya. They, of course, had no difficulty with the discipline as they were quite used to it. There were also several ex-Police cadets. One or two of the younger lads who had never been away from home before did find it rather hard. I was fortunate I suppose, in that my time living in digs in London hadn't been easy and I now found that the regime at the training centre was something I could cope with without difficulty.

We were allocated to dormitories and each of us had a bed, wardrobe and small cupboard. Our beds had to be stripped every morning and the bedding folded in a certain way. Everything was done in a very military fashion and dormitory inspections were frequent. Each morning after breakfast we had to parade in our class squads on the parade square ready for inspection. Our boots had to be "bulled" to a very high shine and haircuts were constantly criticized. I had an especially short haircut done before I left Southampton for Sandgate but I was still told to "Get it cut" on the first inspection.

The barber came to the centre every Tuesday evening and for one shilling (5p) he would give you a really short going over and you could also go back the next Tuesday for a free neck shave. At least this kept the Commandant and Will Squires off your back.

On Wednesday evenings we were allowed to leave the premises to go into town and of course, we always took advantage of this privilege although we had to be back by curfew which I seem to remember was about 10 pm. We were also allowed to leave at weekends but had to be back by Sunday evening. A group of us often hired a car and drove along the South coast dropping people off along the way. Barry Peskett on the A27 near Bognor Regis where his wife would pick him up, Mick Jenkins at Portsmouth and me at Southampton. The lad who usually drove came from the New Forest and he would then pick us up again on Sunday evening for the drive back.

Weekends were not completely free however as we had to learn our definitions. Sue must have hated them as much as I did. She helped me to learn them parrot fashion and spent her weekends testing me. One that I can still remember is "A constable is a citizen, locally appointed but having authority under The Crown for the protection of life and property, the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension of offenders against the peace."

One particular lad in our class, Noakes, who claimed to be an ex-West Ham footballer, always had great difficulty in remembering his definitions. This may have had something to do with the fact that each weekend, he would leave the centre but instead of going home, he would stay with his girlfriend who happened to live across the road from his home where his wife and children were. Talk about doing it on your own doorstep! Anyway, he was obviously preoccupied and definitions were clearly not at the top of his agenda for the weekend so on Monday mornings when we were tested, it soon became apparent that Noakes didn't have a clue. On top of this, whenever he was called upon to stand up and answer any question in class he would go bright red and start sweating if he didn't know the answer. On one particular Monday, he was invited by our class instructor, Sergeant Hopkins, to stand and give a particular definition which he, of course, didn't know. Well, he glowed and sweated until it was really running down his face and was soaking into his collar. He reached down to his trouser pocket and pulled out what he thought was his handkerchief and started to wipe his

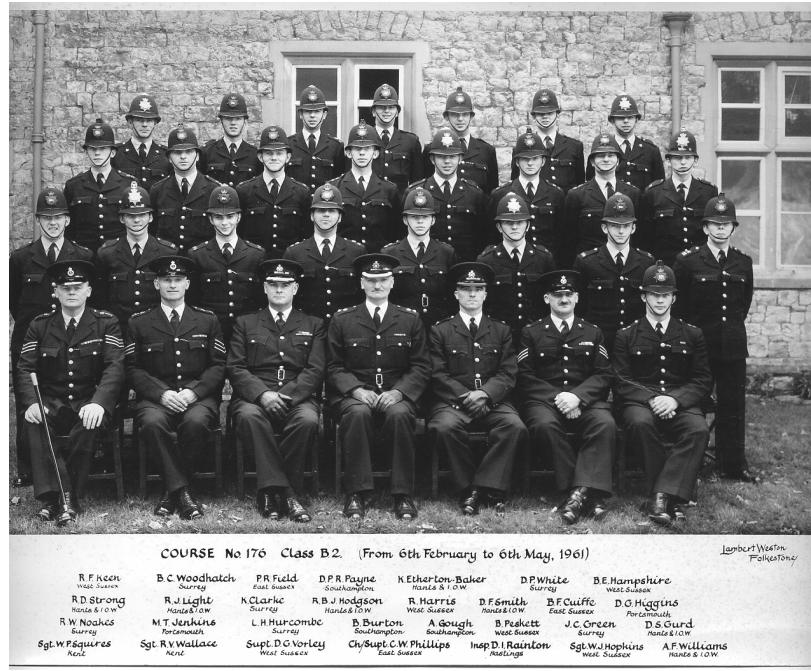
Alan Gough – Life Story

face. The class roared with laughter as we spotted that what he actually had in his hand was in fact a pair of skimpy pink panties. Even the instructor had to smile.

Drill lessons were carried out a couple of times a week and I found them quite therapeutic. Sergeant Will Squires was an excellent bloke, strict but with a sense of fun which came to the surface every now and then. During our drill session he would always break off half way through with “Let’s nip behind the shed for a spit and a draw”. I’m sure that the Commandant couldn’t have failed to see the clouds of smoke rising from beyond the shed at the edge of the parade square if he had cared to look from his office window. When we were marching the forward arm had to come up so that it was extended horizontally. Will’s other favourite phrase during drill was “Get them arms up tit high”.

Every morning the Commandant or his deputy took the inspection on the parade square. As he came along the line you had to shout out your name and force at the top of your voice –“Gough, Southampton, Sir”. One of the lads in our class was a real country boy. A lovely, very large red faced chap who spoke very slowly with a rural Hampshire accent and as the Commandant arrived in front of him he would shout out his name and force, with each syllable lasting what seemed like several seconds, as “Kenneth Etherton-Baker, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary, Sir”. Well, by the time he had finished spouting all this out, the Commandant was already about three men further along the line.

There were two blokes on our course whose names were those of English Counties. Although they weren’t in the same class and therefore should have been in different squads on the parade, we sometimes made sure that they stood next to each other on the parade so we had “Hampshire, West Sussex, Sir, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Sir” which also caused the odd giggle.



One of the objects of all this drill was to prepare for the passing out parades. One was held at the end of every course so each class would attend two parades, one as juniors and one as seniors. On these occasions we were fortunate to have a band in attendance from the nearby Shorncliffe Army camp. This made the parade so much more exciting and I always felt very proud when taking part with the band playing. On our passing out parade, the guest was one

of the Inspectors of Constabulary and I was one of those who he spoke to as he passed along the line.



Inspection



March Past

Great emphasis was placed on physical fitness as well as self-defence and our instructor for these subjects was Sergeant “Punchy” Wallace, a complete lunatic who, we all reckoned, thought that he was invincible. He would pick on students to throw around in the self-defence lessons but one day, while teaching another class, he picked on the wrong one and ended up with a broken arm. He was later heard to tell someone that he done it by slipping on the ice.

Another activity which he took us for was swimming and life saving. Those who couldn’t swim had to try to learn and those who could were expected to achieve bronze medallion standard for life saving. It was a struggle but on 14th April 1961 I did manage to get my medal. That’s the only thing connected with swimming where I’ve managed to equal Sue’s many achievements.

Although I did have to leave The Strangers when I joined the police, music did still manage to play its part, even at Sandgate. We discovered that Dave Strong played a banjo and Mick Jenkins could play the drums. We got together and practiced a few songs having also made a bass out of a tea chest, a broom handle and a length of string. For some reason, which is now long forgotten, we called ourselves Gough and his Troggs (and remember, this was long before Reg Presley’s Troggs of “Wild Thing” fame). We actually played a set at the dance which took place in the evening after our passing out parade. Just some standard skiffle and rock ‘n’ roll stuff.

Anyway, when I left Sandgate I was fitter than I had ever been and it is just a pity that there was no sort of follow-up when we returned to our forces. It was left entirely to the individual to keep himself fit. I used to play football for the Division. It is very different nowadays with many keep fit facilities available within the force.

My first posting was to “A” Division at the Civic Centre. There I was sent out on the beat with other Police Constables for the first couple of weeks then it was off on my own. Shifts were 6 am – 2 pm, 2 pm – 10 pm and 10 pm – 6 am. We reported for duty 15 minutes before the shift was due to start by assembling in the parade room. At a quarter to the hour, an Inspector, followed by three Sergeants, would enter the room to the shout of “Produce appointments.” We would jump to our feet in a line and hold up our truncheons vertically in the right hand and our handcuffs in our left hand with the screw holes showing at the top

ready for inspection. We would, of course, already be dressed in full uniform including helmets and overcoats, when needed, ready for the street. After inspection we were ordered to “Put ‘em up” which meant putting the truncheon and handcuffs away in their respective pockets.



Once we had been inspected and our duties read out and noted in our pocket books, a list of recent crimes, stolen vehicles and wanted persons would be read out by one of the Sergeants and noted in our pocket books. Then we were ordered to “Right turn” followed by “Quick march” and we were marched out of the station in single file along the front of the Civic Centre to the main cross roads in Above Bar accompanied by one of the Sergeants. Here, two of the PCs would leave the line to begin patrolling their beats. The rest of the line would continue down Above Bar until there was just the officer for 1 and 2 beats and maybe the one for 3 and 4 beats and the Sergeant left. This would be somewhere near Holyrood Church. The Sergeant would then patrol with one of the PCs for a while before leaving to find the next PC and so on until he arrived back to the station.

Patrolling a beat in those days was very different to today. For a start, there were no radios. Contact was maintained via police pillars and police boxes. The pillars were located on the pavement at major junctions. They were blue with a light on the top that was covered with a metal protective grid. There were two small doors on the side. Access to one was only available to police officers with a key and it contained a direct phone line to the station. The other door revealed a phone which could be used by members of the public to contact the 999 emergency operator directly. If the station wished to contact an officer the light on top of the pillar would flash to attract attention. In Southampton, police boxes were small brick built units that contained a phone and a desk and chair. These could be used to write reports but were unheated with poor lighting and were rather smelly with little or no ventilation. They were therefore usually only used occasionally to take a quick break and rest the legs while having a smoke.

At about 4 o’clock one morning as it was just beginning to get light, I was standing in the doorway of the then National Provincial Bank (later the National Westminster Bank and now a restaurant) opposite Holyrood Church. I was at the top of the steps trying to keep warm. That time of the morning usually felt the coldest during a night shift. Suddenly I heard voices muttering. “Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb”. I couldn’t make out what they were saying but the sound was definitely coming from inside the bank. “Crikey, I’m about to catch a gang of bank robbers,” I thought. I very quietly made my way forward towards the blue Police pillar that was immediately outside the bank. As I stepped out of the shelter of the doorway a plop of something whistled past my ear and splattered onto the ground. I looked up and there on the parapet above the doorway was a line of pigeons. “Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb” they

murmured. A Chief's Commendation was not on the cards then. Good job I didn't get as far as the pillar, that one would have stuck with me for the rest of my career.

While I was at A Division someone decided to try to start an angling section as part of the Sports & Social Club. A notice to that effect was put onto the notice board asking for the names of those interested to be added. Within a couple of days the following names were added and they were all actual serving members of the division;- Mike Pike, Pete Mullett, Steve Spratt, John Whale, Jack Whale, Vic Chubb, Ken Mackrell and Dave Salmon. Once the laughing had died down the list disappeared and was never seen again.

On 19th November 1961 I was transferred to "C" Division at Bitterne Police Station and a fortnight later on 4th December I began my Intermediate Probationer Training Course at Sandgate which lasted two weeks.

This was followed, on 14th January 1963, by my Final Probationer Training Course which was also of two weeks duration. However, that fortnight was to be very different from the Intermediate fortnight.

For this final course, we were sent to Shorncliffe Army Camp, not far from Sandgate. It was mid winter and a severe winter at that. Snow had frozen into sheet ice several inches thick on the parade square and on all of the roads and footpaths through the camp. The accommodation had been unoccupied for many months. The Instructors had arrived a week earlier and had tried their best to make things as comfortable as possible for us, the first batch of trainees. We were accommodated in Nissen huts with coke stoves in the centre and the classrooms were the same. So, we were breathing coke fumes all day and all night. Not very healthy.

Although it was bitterly cold and dangerously slippery, we still had to carry out our inspection parades on the square each morning.

The only rebellion, however, came when the Instructors tried to hold us to the same rules as applied at Sandgate by way of banning us from leaving the camp except on Wednesday evenings and at weekends. We managed to persuade them that, owing to the need for some daily fresh air, we should be allowed to leave the camp on any night as long as we returned by a reasonable hour. This was agreed and the fortnight passed relatively pain free. The studying was still hard work though.

It was during that dreadful winter of 1962-3 while I was on a night duty at Bitterne that the snow became so deep and treacherous that traffic was unable to drive up Lances Hill. Several of the night duty section spent much of the night helping to push cars up the hill. A number of local tractor owners (possibly farmers) also turned up and towed the larger vehicles up the hill one at a time. In the early hours of the morning the station received a call from a worried woman in Harefield council estate reporting that her teenaged daughter had not arrived home from a night out. I was sent, on foot of course, from the station to the address to interview the woman and obtain full details and possibly a photo of the missing girl. I took a long time to get there, sometimes wading through quite deep snowdrifts. On my arrival at the house I found it to be in darkness. I knocked several times before a first floor window was opened and a woman told me not to worry as the girl had returned home. She hadn't bothered to let the station know so it was a good job I couldn't get my hands around her neck. What a night that was. I was more than ready for bed by the time I got home.

At their meeting on 7th March 1963, the Watch Committee, which was the Council's body that oversaw the running of the police force, confirmed the appointment of PC A Gough and PC B Burton with effect from 2nd February 1963. David Payne had resigned prematurely having not completed his Probationary period.

The police station at Bitterne was of the old county variety consisting of the main building containing the public enquiry office, a canteen, parade room, CID office and Superintendent's office. All of these were small by today's standards. Then there was a police house on either side. It was the type of Police Station that you would expect to see in an Agatha Christie novel. During my posting at Bitterne Division the old building was vacated and pulled down and a new modern station built on the site. (*2016 - That has itself now been closed*). While this was being carried out we used the old Woolston Police Station in Portsmouth Road on the corner of Fort Road. That was in the same old style as the old Bitterne station and it has since been replaced by a school.

Beats at Bitterne were patrolled on bicycles, known to us as "fast blacks". This was fine for some beats but not so good when you were allocated 11 and 12 beats which meant climbing over Witts Hill to Bitterne Triangle and back several times a day. The main roads at Bitterne and at Woolston had their own dedicated beat man and he was not allowed to leave the main road until he had been relieved either for his meal break or at the end of his shift. They were patrolled 24 hours a day, every day. If you needed one, you could always find a policeman in Woolston and Bitterne. Shopkeepers got to know their local police officers and vice versa.

Much of the daytime shifts were spent doing traffic duty at points such as the top of Lances Hill, Bullar Road junction with Bitterne Road and London Corner in Woolston. There were also many school crossings to be manned four times a day.

On top of these duties, officers had to carry out routine enquiries, serve summonses and respond to reports of crimes and offences as well as maintain a good close liaison with members of the public. And remember, it was still a few years before radios were introduced. I did enjoy my time at Bitterne Division however, and I worked with some very good mates there.

Several of the beats came together at the main road through Bitterne and on nights several of us would meet up behind Moore's Newsagents at the top of Lances Hill. The shop is now the home of a firm of estate agents. As a newsagent's shop there was a covered lean-to shed at the rear with a long bench on which the newspapers could be sorted out ready for the delivery rounds. On some nights you could find up to five PCs sitting on that bench – (don't tell the Sergeant or the Inspector!) We would have a fag and a chat then resume our beats.

Some nights, when it was really quiet we would get a ball down from the roof of Bitterne School (there is always at least one ball to be found on any school roof) and we would have a game of footy in the main road. Between 3.00am and about 4.30 am the place was absolutely deserted. If anyone did happen to come through, it was a pretty good bet that they were up to no good and were well worth a thorough check and search. Many a villain was caught by a spot check at night. Doesn't happen nowadays though – and they wonder why the crime rate has gone up!!

Another duty on nights was to physically check all of the business premises on your patch. Rattle the door handles and check all of the windows. Many a break-in was discovered by the beat man. The keyholder would be called out and details of any stolen property circulated at a

very early stage. Insecure premises were also often found. We were expected to visit the premises once before our meal and again after it.

Mealtimes lasted 45 minutes and at night were either at 1.00 am or at 2.15 am. They invariably included chips and a game of cribbage with Radio Luxemburg playing on the radio.

At six o'clock in the morning our shift would be over and we would get home to bed. However, if a break-in was reported later in the morning and it had not been discovered by the beat man during the night, the relevant officer would often be called back from his bed to appear before the Superintendent to explain why he had not found it.

An officer who was required for Court in the morning was allowed to go home from his night shift at 4.00 am to allow him to get a couple of hours sleep before getting to the Civic Centre Magistrates Court for 10.00 am. They did, however, take two hours from your time off due. Sometimes you would be there all day waiting for your case to be called and you would still have to be back on night duty at 9.45 pm. The system didn't really encourage some of the less keen officers to get prisoners. However, anyone who had ambitions to move on from uniformed beat work to a more specialised department such as Traffic, C.I.D. Drugs or Vice Squads, would make sure that they took any opportunity to deal with cases that would bring them to the attention of those in charge of those departments even if it did mean losing sleep.

A number of duties undertaken by uniformed PCs were rotated around the shift. One such was known as "Reserve". That officer stayed at the station and assisted at the enquiry desk if it became busy. His main purpose, however, was to prepare the meals that the outside PCs and Sergeants had brought with them. There were always two meal breaks of 45 minutes in each shift so with about 14 -17 PCs and 2 or 3 Sergeants to feed that could be a bit of a challenge, particularly as they had probably all brought different items to be prepared. On the early 6am to 2pm shift and on the night shift 10pm to 6am chips were always cooked. Never on the late 2pm to 10pm shift though. During the daytime shifts another priority was to keep the Chief Inspector or Superintendent supplied with cups of coffee or tea. The welfare of prisoners held in the cells was also added to the Reserve's responsibilities. So although it was sometimes good to be allocated Reserve duties when it was pouring with rain or freezing cold outside, you were on the run the whole time.

Another of these rotated duties was the Team Car. Each shift had its Emergency Driver, a PC who had passed a special driving test with a Sergeant from the Traffic Department to drive a Commer Van sometimes known by us as "The Pig" or by the public as "The Black Maria". He had to respond to all emergency calls during the day. At night, the van was crewed by the driver and a Sergeant in the front with a PC in the back. All vulnerable properties in the division were visited and checked by the Team Car crew and a record sheet completed. Any events were usually dealt with by the PC under the supervision of the Sergeant.

One night, sometime after midnight, when I was in the Bitterne Team Car, a call went out from the Control Room to all cars to the effect that a rhinoceros had escaped from Southampton Zoo on The Common. Not a good night to be in the Team Car crew. We began to make our way over to the Common at high speed, each of us hoping that someone else would locate the missing beast. Fortunately, we were almost there when a radio message reported that the zoo staff had located it and had managed to return it to its enclosure without anyone (or the animal) getting hurt.

While I was at Bitterne a new form of policing was introduced more or less nationwide. It was called Unit Beat Policing. The idea was that each beat would have a particular PC allocated to it. He was the Neighbourhood Beat Officer and he would work a variety of shifts in accordance with the requirements of the patch. These officers would be backed up by a number of officers in small turquoise and cream motor cars such as Austin Minis or Ford Anglias with a Police sign and a blue flashing light on the roof. This enabled the initial responses to calls from the public to be quicker and in addition, the public would get to know their own local Police Constable. It was hoped that through this the relationship between the Police and the Public would become closer. There is a lot of doubt as to whether or not this became the case. One problem was that Neighbourhood Beat Officers were regularly unavailable due to Court commitments, sickness, courses or secondment to other major incidents. Also, officers in cars are removed from close contact with the public while they are patrolling and the relationship therefore became more distant.



SOUTHAMPTON Police six-a-side football trophy was contested at the Sports Centre yesterday by teams from the Central, Shirley and Bitterne divisions as well as the cadets, CID, headquarters' staff and sergeants.

Bitterne B team won the day, beating Central Division's No. 2 section by a goal to nil in the final, and the Chief Constable of Southampton (Mr. A.

T. Cullen, MBE) was there to present the trophy to P.C. H. Mitchell, skipper of the winning team.

The event was organised by P.C. Eric Cullen.

Pictures show 1: the winning Bitterne B team with the Chief Constable and Supt. Eric Coleman (left), of Bitterne; and 2: P.C. Mitchell receiving trophy from the Chief Constable.

Cutting from
Southampton Evening
Echo showing me with
my medal at the back
next to Alf Cullen,
Chief Constable. We
were the Bitterne
Division "B" team and
we beat them all!!



When Unit Beat Policing was introduced at Bitterne, I was allocated a Mini, registered number NOT 916 F. Although each car would be driven by a number of different officers, we did try to take a pride in them and keep them up to scratch.

At one point in my early years at Bitterne I spent 8 weeks training as Aide to CID at the Civic Centre Police Station. My allocated mentor was DC “Wiggle” Bennett who I actually saw about twice in the whole period as he was involved in some serious cases which took him away. It was not very well organised but I did manage to work with some other DCs who were quite helpful. Most of the time was spent dealing with minor offences such as shoplifting.

On one occasion however, a stowaway had been arrested on one of the liners arriving at the port and this always attracted the attention of the local and even the national press. The CID office was situated across an access road from the main police station in another part of the Civic Centre complex. At one point it was necessary to bring the stowaway prisoner across to the main building to be photographed and fingerprinted before appearing at the Magistrates Court. The press were aware that this would happen and they were gathered in some numbers ready to photograph the prisoner being brought across the road. In order to avoid any identification of the prisoner that might affect his court appearance it was decided to send across a decoy. Guess who that was. Moi. I had a coat thrown over my head and I was ushered across the road at speed with the cameras flashing away. Once the press had disappeared having got what they believed to be what they were after, the real stowaway was brought across with no attention being paid. The press soon realised they had been duped and none of the pictures of me appeared in the papers.

The Bank of England building was situated in High Street and the alarm system was connected to the radio room at Civic Centre Police Station. One day during my period of Aide the alarm was triggered and a detailed plan of action sprang into effect. Lots of officers were directed to the scene and one CID unit was ordered to report to the front office at the station. That day it happened to be DC “Diver” Whale and me who were working together and were in the CID Hillman Husky. On arrival at the front office DC Whale was issued with an old post war revolver and I was given 6 bullets. We were told that the same officer was not permitted to carry both. We drove to the Bank of England where we were met outside the front by a uniformed Inspector in charge of proceedings. He seemed to be in a bit of a panic and immediately said the DC Whale, “You stay here” and turning to me said, “Go round the back”. I began to say that I was carrying the bullets for DC Whale’s pistol but the Inspector interrupted me and angrily shouted for me to do as I was ordered. So off I went thinking that if any bank robbers were to exit at the rear of the building I would have to throw bullets at them while they might be firing theirs back at me. Meanwhile DC Whale would be playing a game of bluff at the front.

Thankfully, much has changed since those days in regard to firearms training and use.

There is a good account of life in Southampton Police in the 50s and 60s written by Jim Brown who I knew well. It can be found on the internet at the following address
<https://www.hampshireconstabularyhistory.org.uk/stories/policing-southampton-in-the-1950s/>

I had by now changed my motor bike and became the proud owner of my first Triumph Tiger 110, a 650c.c. machine with tremendous power, a bit of a death trap in the wrong hands. Whenever I was off duty I would ride over to Cumberland Place and wait outside Sue’s office for her to finish work. She would then ride home on the pillion seat, weaving in and out of

the traffic queue on Northam Bridge. I later changed that bike for another more modern Tiger 110, a white one with black stripe and chrome “D” bars at the front and rear with twin spotlights. That was a beautiful bike.

On Saturday, 14th September 1963, Sue and I were married at St Mark’s Church in Woolston. We had managed to find the deposit for a new three-bedroomed semi-detached house at 100 The Grove, Sholing the price of which was £2,895. Although money was very tight we hoped that we would be able to afford the monthly mortgage payments of £15.18s 10d (about £15.94p in today’s money). We spent our honeymoon of one week at a boarding house in Mutley, Plymouth.

We had borrowed a car and have some great memories of that week. Apart from touring the area and visiting beaches, we also went horse riding on the moor and Sue’s bottom became red raw. Most evenings were spent rubbing cream into the wound (or is that too much information?). We went to the variety show at the theatre on the Hoe three times. In the end the host, Gordon Peters, must have felt that he knew us. We also went ballroom dancing at the Town Hall.

On one morning, we went into a building in the centre of Plymouth to visit the Tourist Information office. As we entered the foyer, a voice called out, “Come on, hurry up.” The voice came from a lift and, although we still don’t know why, we went over and got into the lift. That took us to the roof of the building from where we got the most amazing view of the city. What a result. I can’t remember whether or not we ever did get to the Tourist Information office.

On our return to The Grove we started to learn a bit of what married life was about especially the things that we had probably taken for granted while we lived at home with our parents. And we are still learning. We didn’t have much in the way of furniture. The only major new items were the bed and the dining room suite and those had been wedding presents. The rest was second hand. Initially, we had no carpets, no fridge, no television and no washing machine. Our first ‘must have’ was a stair carpet. It was just so noisy on the bare wooden stairs. We saved up and eventually bought a length of carpet with the stair rods for £12. Luxury.

As we gradually managed to buy things for the house we found that we became so excited over the smallest purchases. These, after all, were quite big milestones for us and we felt a real pride in having saved so that we could afford to buy something. Even a replacement second-hand item like the three-piece suite gave us a sense of achievement.

It must have been daunting for Sue when I left the house to go on nights for the first time and she was left in the house alone. It was rather nice for me though, when I came home at 6.30 am to a lovely warm bed, especially in mid-winter.

One of my colleagues on the beat at Bitterne was PC Pete Newman. He was quite a guy. He actually built his own house near to the Castle Pub at the top of Witts Hill. He also built some of his own furniture such as the dining room suite. That was a perfect copy of a G Plan suite which was a popular make of the time. Anyway, one day he told me that he was going to sell his car, a 1936 Standard 8. I agreed to buy it from him for £2 10s (£2.50p today). A bargain. It actually used almost as much oil as it did petrol. Pete told me that he used to go to the garage at the top of Witts Hill and get the oil they had drained out of other cars during

servicing and he would keep his car topped up with that. Sue and I called the car Blodwyn and it actually lasted about 2 months or so before it blew a large hole in the exhaust.

On the same day as that happened, I was doing a 3 pm to 11 pm duty called Bassett Patrol. That was a duty that operated out of Portswood Police Station and consisted of two PCs, one from each of Bitterne, Shirley or Civic Centre. Bassett being the expensive area of Southampton, there were always large numbers of unoccupied big houses where the owners were away on holiday. The officers were issued with a list of these houses and each of them had to be visited twice during a Bassett Patrol with all of the times being noted on a log sheet.

The only respite apart from a 45 minute meal break at Portswood Police Station was a sneaky visit to the petrol station at Chilworth Roundabout where we would get a welcome cup of tea. It was during one of these visits that I saw a chap filling up a very nice but unusual looking car. I went out to take a look and saw that it was a Jowett Javelin. Now you didn't see too many of those about even then. It was a 1950 model and when new it had cost £998, a fortune in those days.

The man told me that he was selling it as he had just bought a new car. He wanted £50 for it and I knew that was a really good price for such a quality car. That night after work I discussed it with Sue and we decided we would buy it. I contacted the owner and the deal was done.



Jowett Javelin

It lasted us 9 months before the repairs became too costly to carry out. The Jowetts had been out of production for many years by then and spares could only be bought from specialist suppliers. But we had had many enjoyable rides in it during the time we owned it including some exciting treasure hunts with the Southampton Police Motor Club to which we belonged.

I eventually sold it for £7 10s (£7.50p) to yet another policeman who lived in The Grove, Don Willie. He decided that he could get it back on the road again but a few months later I saw Tommy Holden's breakdown wagon pulling it out from his driveway to take it to the scrap yard.

Chapter 6 – Drugs Squad

On 1st April 1967, Southampton City Police ceased to exist, having amalgamated with Portsmouth City Police and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary to form a new force, Hampshire Police. By this time my annual salary had increased from its initial £600 to a staggering £935. However, it must be remembered that Sue had stopped paid work just before the birth of our son, Trevor, on 1st March 1966 and she remained a full time mother for some 8 years before she was able to resume. Our daughter, Lindsay, was born on 21st March 1968.

Once the amalgamation took place, a number of new opportunities were created. The County was divided into three operational areas, the North, the South East and the South West. A number of specialist squads were created with a branch of each squad in each operational area. One of these was a new South West Area Vice Squad based at Southampton Civic Centre. I applied and was accepted. The squad consisted of Sergeant Pete Fulford, PC Terry Moisey, WPC Noreen O'Dell and me. Our brief was to deal with prostitution offences, including offences of living on immoral earnings and running brothels as well as offences connected with pornography. Most of our work meant late shifts and, sometimes, double shifts but I knew that it would only be for a limited time. Because of the type of work it was thought best that officers only worked on the Vice Squad for a maximum of twelve months. I actually did fifteen months but the work was interesting and I hoped that it would eventually lead me on to another branch of detective work, the Drugs Squad which the Vice Squad often assisted in carrying out raids.

I returned to uniform duties at Bitterne in about July 1968 and in the following spring I was transferred to the Drugs Squad where I stayed for a period of two and a half years taking us to about February 1971. My introduction to the Drugs Squad was rather odd and frustrating. Detective Sergeant "Jock" Adamson was in charge of the South West Drug Squad and he had arranged with Detective Superintendent Bill Rowe, the South West Area Co-ordinator for all things CID, that I should be transferred to his squad. I was then sent on a one week course with the Met Police Drugs Squad based at New Scotland Yard. That itself became a story – more of which later. On my return to Southampton DS Adamson told me to report for duty with the squad on the Monday which I duly did. During his regular Monday telephone conversation with Bill Rowe he was told something to the effect that "Just because he's been on an f'ing drugs course doesn't mean he's going on the f'ing drugs squad". Jock Adamson was really embarrassed and apologetic when he broke the news to me. I understood perfectly as Bill Rowe was well known to be a bit erratic especially in the mornings.

I therefore had to go home, get changed into uniform and report back to Bitterne Police Station. On my arrival there, DS John Porter who was in charge of CID at that station, having got wind of the story, asked if I would like a spell of CID Aide. Yes please so it was off home yet again to change back into civvies.

On my return to Bitterne CID office I was given a burglary to investigate. It had taken place during the previous evening or overnight at a small shop in Peveril Road who's owner carried out shoe repairs and also sold a range of fishing tackle. Two rods and reels had been taken together with some accessories. I spent the morning touring Weston Shore and the Woolston banks of the River Itchen looking for any suspects without success. My intention was to then go to the river near Cobden Bridge and Woodmill. However, on passing Peartree Green I saw what appeared to be a gorse fire with the fire brigade in attendance. I walked over to find my brother-in-law, Ray Ollett, as one of the firefighters. As we chatted I suddenly noticed two

lads coming towards us carrying fishing rods. When I approached them it was clear that these were the stolen items and I arrested the boys on suspicion of burglary. As they were quite young I needed to inform their parents and to interview each of them in their parent's presence. I knew that the name and address given by one of the boys was false as I had come across him on a previous occasion. So I took him to the house where I knew he lived and gathered up his rather angry mother. In the end they admitted the offences.

After a few days I was given the paperwork to transfer me to Drugs Squad officially. Fred Kamo's Army couldn't have been more chaotic. Not as bad as the events that took place in the Met sometime after my course. I had always felt a bit uncomfortable with the Detective Sergeant, DS Norman "Nobby" Pilcher, and some of the Detective Constables I was attached to. Nothing I could put my finger on but they did seem to live above their means by a good distance. For instance a DC living in a large 5 bedroomed house in an expensive commuter area on the western outskirts of the capital and on one occasion I believe I saw something change hands when I was taken by DS Pilcher to visit Caroline Coon, co-founder of the organisation "Release". Anyway, my fears were confirmed some time later when I read that a number of officers on that squad had been arrested on corruption charges and DS Pilcher had been arrested getting off a plane in Australia where he had gone to try to evade justice. There is plenty more about Pilcher and his bent colleagues on the internet. Several of these officers ended up serving time in prison.

Pilcher had become infamous during the 1960s for arresting celebrities on drug charges, such as Mick Jagger, Brian Jones and Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones, Donovan and also two members of The Beatles, George Harrison and John Lennon. Eric Clapton was nearly arrested at The Pheasantry on drugs charges, but escaped from the rear of the building when Pilcher rang the doorbell to announce "postman, special delivery". Several celebrities complained that Detective Sergeant Pilcher had framed them, or was only carrying out raids and arrests to satisfy the tabloid newspapers. As is evident from reports in the alternative press and histories of that time, it was widely believed that Pilcher was frequently planting the drugs his victims were convicted of possessing, though this has never been proven.

Fortunately, Hampshire Police was far removed from that kind of behaviour. We made excellent contacts with the people who ran the various local night spots, clubs and dance halls where much of the drug dealing took place.

We also spent a lot of time on various ships arriving at Southampton especially those arriving from Africa or the West Indies. Whenever the Master-at-Arms on a vessel caught someone (usually crew) in possession of drugs (usually cannabis) he would lock them in the brig until the ship docked. We would meet the ship and after being treated to an enormous fried breakfast (I think that was compulsory) we would formally arrest the miscreant and take him or her to the Civic Centre Police Station to be documented and charged.

This happened regularly in the case of the Union Castle ships. One of them always arrived at about 6.00 am on a Monday so it meant frequent early starts. In the often bitterly cold weather, standing on the dockside waiting for a ship to berth wasn't the best part of the job but the thought of the fry-up certainly eased the pain. Other favourites were the banana boats, the Golfito and the Benito.

It was during that period, in August 1970, over the Bank Holiday weekend that the biggest ever Isle of Wight pop festival was held. I was part of the large Drugs Squad of about 30 men and women officers who were sent to cover the event.

Although we dressed like hippies and spent about 18 hours each day either on the site or at one of the ferry terminals at Yarmouth, Cowes, Ryde or Freshwater, we did actually sleep in hotels and we were fed at intervals in Newport. Our time was spent searching people for drugs as they disembarked from the ferries. On one occasion we searched a couple in a VW Campervan. They were quite annoyed at being stopped and searched and kept complaining that we would wake their baby who was asleep in the van. We searched them and the van as far as we could and found nothing. However, we were still convinced that they were carrying drugs somewhere. We eventually decided that we had to move the baby and guess what we found in a compartment underneath the cot? Yep, a large stash of cannabis resin, enough to keep a large group of people “happy” for the duration of the festival.

It was an interesting few days and I was teamed up with a great lad called John Harvey who was then a PC on the Portsmouth Drugs Squad. That is him in the white cap next to me on the back row of the photo below. He eventually went on to retire as a Detective Superintendent.

One day, we were on the site when our boss, Detective Sergeant “Jock” Adamson came to us and asked us to try to make a test drug purchase from a particular individual who was stopping people as they walked past and appeared to be selling. John and I went towards him and he asked us if we wanted some “acid” (LSD). We said we weren’t going to buy unless we saw what we were buying so he told us to follow him. Now, that’s always a bit dodgy because you never know if he’s sussed who you are and is leading you into a trap, so we were extra vigilant. Well, he took us to another fellow and told him that we wanted to see the “acid”. This second lad put his hand into his top jacket pocket and pulled out a handful of small tablets which we recognised as being LSD. We grabbed him and some of the tablets and told him that he was being arrested. The first guy then ran off but we had the more important one. The one we had arrested then started shouting to the crowd, “Help me. These are cops and they’ve arrested me. Free acid for everyone who helps me to escape.” We were dragging him towards the exit to get him to our headquarters building across the road. The further we got, the bigger the crowd that was surrounding us became. Eventually, about 50 yards from the gate, they all piled in and the guy got away. John and I took a couple of knocks but nothing too serious. I guess it would have been much worse if it had happened today. When we got ourselves together again we realised that we still had the tablets and what’s more we had his shoulder bag. When we emptied the bag at our headquarters we foundhis passport!! He was circulated nationally as wanted and it took a few years before he came to notice again but he did eventually and was convicted.

There were a few other incidents during the festival such as the anarchists (mainly French) who settled themselves on a hill overlooking the site and demanded free entrance to the festival. It even got to the stage where they let off a couple of hand grenades. Fortunately, nobody was hurt but it did get a bit scary some nights.

However, the majority of the time everyone enjoyed themselves and there was plenty of good humour, even if lots of it was under the influence of one unlawful chemical or another.

They reckon that over half a million people attended and the weather remained dry for the duration of the festival but it did rain on Monday 1st September which certainly encouraged this great unwashed horde to leave the site and to go home. Rain – always the policeman’s best friend.



Me – 4th from left in back row

This is a list of the artists who appeared at the festival :-

Wednesday 26th: Judas Jump, Kathy Smith, Rosalie Sorrels, David Bromberg, Redbone, Kris Kristofferson, Mighty Baby.

Thursday 27th: Gary Farr, Supertramp, Andy Roberts Everyone, Howl, Black Widow, Groundhogs, Terry Reid, Gilberto Gil.

Friday 28th: Fairfield Parlour, Arrival, Lighthouse, Taste, Tony Joe White, Chicago, Family, Procol Harum, The Voices of East Harlem, Cactus.

Saturday 29th: John Sebastian, Shawn Phillips, Lighthouse, Joni Mitchell, Tiny Tim, Miles Davis, Ten Years After, Emerson Lake and Palmer, The Doors, The Who, Melanie, Sly and the Family Stone. Mungo Jerry were there but decided not to play. Tiny Tim with Islanders Cas Caswell bass, Jack Richards drums

Sunday 30th: Good News, Kris Kristofferson, Ralph McTell, Heaven, Free, Donovan, Pentangle, Moody Blues, Jethro Tull, Jimi Hendrix, Joan Baez, Leonard Cohen, Richie Havens, Hawkwind

This was to be Hendrix's last performance in the UK, he died in London 18 days later.

My own claim to fame came one evening at the very end of the festival. A few of us in the drugs squad were invited to a pub in Sandown (I can't remember its name but the landlord's surname was Christmas) for an "After the Festival" party. About six or eight of us went. At closing time, Mr Christmas announced that only invited guests could stay and that all drinks would be free and that there would be food available later – sausage or chicken and chips in

the basket. The only condition was that those who stayed would have to provide the entertainment.

Well, a four piece group got up and played for about 20 or 30 minutes. Then it was our turn. As I was the only one of our party who could do anything in the way of entertaining, I got onto the small stage and played the piano. I can't remember exactly what I played now but after a while a guy came up and joined in playing a guitar, then a bass player and a drummer also joined in. Eventually a chap started to sing and we jammed through a small repertoire of classic rock 'n' roll songs. After about half an hour I decided that I'd done my bit so I returned to my mates. One of them said to me, "You know who that was singing with you don't you?"

I didn't have a clue. "It's only Kris Kristofferson," he said. I wonder if KK remembers that night.

In our day to day duties we would frequently need to obtain a search warrant as a result of information received from informants or from our own observations. For this we had to present our evidence to a magistrate, in private rather than open court. As it happened, Sid Thompson, my old headmaster from Itchen Grammar School, was now a magistrate. He was usually my first port of call when I needed to obtain a warrant. I went to his home in Highfield Lane with a colleague and always had a very nice reception with the offer of a drink (declined of course). He still called me only by my surname, as was the tradition at school, and never as DC Gough or Mr Gough or even Alan. However, we did always come away with our search warrant duly signed.

On the local Southampton scene, one of the main heroin dealers was the son of a respected local pharmacist. Let's call him Nipper. He had come adrift from his upbringing and had connected with a bad bunch. We had a number of good informants but the intelligence was frequently received just too late to catch the dealer. However, on one occasion we were told that Nipper had gone to London as a passenger in a car, the number and description of which we were given. He would be buying a large quantity of heroin and would bring it back to Southampton in the middle of the night ready to sell it to local addicts.

At about midnight, three of us from the squad went to the traffic lights at Hockley crossroads near Winchester on what was then the A35. The Sergeant had obtained a key to the box from where he could control the lights, my colleague hid in some bushes at the side of the road and I laid on my stomach in the shrubbery in the central reservation a few yards before the stop line at the lights on the southbound carriageway.

The idea was that the lights would be held on red so that all vehicles coming from the London direction would be stopped. Once we could see that the target vehicle was not amongst those that were stopped, the light would be changed manually to green to allow them to proceed.

Eventually after several uncomfortable hours, the target appeared and stopped at the lights. The three of us ran towards the car from our different hiding places but it immediately revved up and swung round to the left and made off at high speed towards Twyford. We had already made our Control Room aware of our operation so we radioed the situation. Within a few minutes there were several police cars in the area looking for the suspect car. It was eventually spotted travelling along the A27 down Gaters Hill towards Swaythling. We asked the traffic car not to overtake but to watch for anything being dropped out of the car.

They reported a package being dropped out of the nearside passenger door and shortly after that another police car approached from the opposite direction and the suspects were trapped.

When we searched back along the roadside we found a package of heroin that would have made Nipper very rich for a few weeks at least. At the subsequent court hearing he received a prison sentence. I never came across him again in my time on the squad.

It was during my time on the Drugs Squad that I first experienced a lack of support from the top. I was working with Terry Moisey and we were enjoying a pint in a favourite druggie's haunt, the Robbie Burns pub in Palmerston Road. In those days CID officers were encouraged to visit licenced premises to obtain information (without getting totally legless) as that has always been where our "customers" tend to congregate. After a while a group of known drug users came into the pub led by one who was well known to us as a dealer. Once they spotted us the leader began to taunt us making it quite obvious to us that he was not carrying. However, there was one among them who kept very quiet, in fact we had not come across him before.

We guessed that he might be the one carrying the drugs for the other loudmouths. We decided to search them all so we "invited" them outside. I began to search the leader while Terry searched the quiet new lad. He stuck his forefinger and middle file finger down into the lad's top pocket of his jacket and pulled out a wrap of cannabis. Nothing much, but enough for him to be arrested.

The others, who had by now crowded around us, started shouting, "You planted that. We saw it in between your fingers before you dipped them into his pocket." Absolute nonsense of course but we needed to get him away and off to the Police Station as quickly as possible before this escalated into violence.

He came with us without any resistance and once at the station we began the formal documentation and interview procedure. After a short while a uniformed desk sergeant came to us and told us that there was a large crowd in the front office claiming that they had seen us plant drugs on one of their mates. Apparently they were in the process of making written signed statements to that effect.

The next day Terry and I were called to see a senior officer and were told that there would be a formal investigation into our actions. That was just normal practice in the event of a complaint against a Police Officer. We were not suspended and carried on with our normal duties although we were both very worried about the possible outcome bearing in mind the number of statements that had been made against us.

A few weeks later, however, we were told that all of the original complainants had retracted their statements. We were delighted but were also told that we would have to wait until after the court case against our original prisoner had been concluded before we could be exonerated. We asked what difference that might make and were told that if he was to be found not guilty we might still be in hot water. This seemed totally unfair but there appeared nothing we could do. Eventually he appeared at court where he pleaded guilty at which point we thought the matter could finally be put to rest.

We were called in to the senior officer again where we were told that there would be no further action against us on the grounds that there was "insufficient evidence". Rather than the exoneration we were expecting, that implied that our bosses thought that we *had* planted

Alan Gough – Life Story

the youngster but that they couldn't prove it. We felt completely let down by the senior investigating officer and, although our immediate boss was fully supportive, it made it difficult to trust some of those further up the line in the future.

Towards the end of 1970 "Jock" Adamson retired and we got a new Sergeant, Allan Grimwood. He had been promoted from being a DC at Winchester. He was a very different bloke from DS Adamson and he soon made a number of changes to our way of working. The Southampton office of the squad consisted of the Sergeant and three Detective Constables. We normally worked either nine to five or four to midnight in two pairs. If there was anything special to be done such as a surveillance job or a raid to be carried out then we would work whatever hours were required until the job was completed. A sixteen hour day was not that unusual. When Allan Grimwood arrived he wanted the nine to five pair to stay on through the evening whether or not there was any special operation on. Well, two of us, Graham Shattock and myself, rebelled and argued that it was not necessary and that we had always been happy to stay on if there was a reason to do so. Neither of us was rude or offensive in any way but we both felt that we had a genuine point to make. In a small squad it had always been encouraged to air these things in order to resolve them. However, this did not go down well with the new boss and the long and short of it is that in February 1971 Graham and I were shifted out of the squad, both of us to uniform duties which we both felt was a backward step and totally unfair. A lot of people who knew us commented that it said a lot more about Allan Grimwood than it did about us. Graham was transferred to the Civic Centre and I went to Eastleigh.

Chapter 7 – Eastleigh & Southampton Central

I accepted my fate. After all, moaning about it was never going to do any good. I determined that I would do all I could to demonstrate my interest in detecting crime with a view to an eventual move to C.I.D. In the meantime, there was plenty of uniform patrolling to be done, sometimes on foot and sometimes in a Panda Car.

One day, I was patrolling on foot along Leigh Road when a middle-aged woman came running up to me and said, “Are you any good at picking up birds?” Well, I thought, “I reckon I could if I wanted to but what has that got to do with you?”

She obviously saw the odd look on my face so she explained, pointing across the road, “There’s a pigeon on the road over there and it seems to be injured.” Relieved, I went over and picked up the bird, which was in great danger of being run over, and took it back to the nearby Police Station. I contacted a local breeder who came and collected it. It was a racing pigeon that had apparently become exhausted and after a day or so resting, it continued on its journey.

On another occasion just after midnight on the first of January when the New Year was but a couple of minutes old, I was told by a passer by that someone was stealing the lights from the large Christmas tree outside the Town Hall. I made my way there and began to search the area for the man who had been described to me. I soon found him rustling in some bushes in the front garden of a house in Archers Road. He was a regular, well-known, local thief. I arrested him and walked him back to the station. The Station Sergeant said that it was the quickest New Year arrest that he could ever remember.

Shortly after my move to Eastleigh I heard from a reliable source that Grimwood had actually been to see the Chief Inspector in charge at Eastleigh and had advised him to watch me closely claiming that I didn’t pull my weight. I just kept my head down and took any opportunity I could to deal with crime jobs and get prisoners rather than concentrate on traffic offences. Fortunately, the Chief Inspector did as he had been advised. He did watch me and discovered that I did work hard and it wasn’t long before he called me into his office and offered to give me an attachment to his CID.

I was delighted and late in 1971 I began what they call “Aide to CID” working along with some very experienced detectives, Sergeant Ray Weston and DCs Bill Berry, Tom Bechelet and Reg Wood. I couldn’t have had better mentors.

Then on 22nd February 1972, something happened that was tragic in itself but which helped me personally. The IRA exploded a bomb at the 16th Parachute Brigade Headquarters at Aldershot. Five women and an Army priest were killed. The Head of Hampshire CID brought together a large squad of detectives to investigate this atrocious incident. Eastleigh CID was left with Reg and me. That meant that all the crime that happened in Eastleigh Division during that period came through us. I was able to deal with some very interesting jobs. This would stand me in good stead when it came to the selection interviews for CID training courses. These were held about twice a year and candidates were expected to show that they had a broad knowledge and experience of CID work so far.

Following an interview later that year I was accepted for a CID course at Birmingham City’s Training Centre known as Tally Ho which was situated at Edgebaston next to the famous cricket ground. The course lasted 10 weeks and was very intensive. There was an enormous

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amount of law to be learned but we also learned a lot about curry. There were blokes in the class from all over England and Wales. In the evenings we had to do a few hours of learning before we could go out. I think we probably went to at least one curry house a week, possibly more and I believe we didn't go to the same one twice.

In our class we all had to become honorary Aston Villa supporters for the duration of our course. Our class instructor, Detective Sergeant Ellsworthy, was an avid supporter and every week he would sell us club draw tickets. I can't remember anyone ever winning – maybe they did.

Apart from the Detective Training School, the site also held the building that was the Birmingham City Police Club. Very handy. They occasionally had cabaret shows and I remember seeing Sandy Powell there. He was a famous old Music Hall comedian who was, by then, 72 years of age. His famous catch phrase was "Can you 'ear me mother?"

On another occasion, the club played host to the New Zealand "All Blacks" Rugby Team who were on tour in Britain. They had recently been beaten by Llanelli and had even had one of their number, Keith Murdoch, sent back home in disgrace for something that happened in Cardiff. Anyway, many of them were in a pretty aggressive mood. None more so than Grant Batty, a small but very belligerent "hard man". You could tell they were spoiling for a fight. I kept my distance and it wasn't long before it kicked off with several All Blacks mixing it with several local DCs. The All Blacks management, fearing another bit of a scandal in the press, soon pulled them all out and they were piled back into their coach and driven away. Some guests!

Back at Eastleigh after the course, I was confirmed as a full member of CID becoming a Detective Constable.

During my spell at Eastleigh, I, together with Roger Sparkes and Colin Crawley formed a rock 'n' roll band to perform at police functions. There was a thriving Police Club at the rear of Eastleigh Police Station and we were often invited to play there on a Saturday night. As Police Officers we were not allowed to take other paid work so we employed the services of a civvie drummer who happened to charge the earth. Well, he charged about four times what a single musician would charge. Draw your own conclusions.

I played piano, Roger was on guitar and Colin was on bass. At first we called ourselves Major Scarlet's Foot Pump and we later changed it to Force Four. Before joining the police, Colin had played professionally in a band in Hamburg clubs fronted by Tony Sheridan. For some of that time Ringo Starr was their drummer before he joined The Beatles. We played lots of classic Rock 'n' Roll and Country stuff.



One night we played at a Bitterne Division dance that was held at a barn at Boorley Green. The music critic from the Southampton Echo came with a photographer and the following report later appeared in the Echo.

As a result of the comments in the article about us playing at the Polygon Hotel, we were summoned by one of the top brass who threatened to investigate us as it seemed we were undertaking outside employment against police regulations. He didn't bother to ask what we were actually doing there. As it happened we had been playing at a Police Divisional Dinner Dance. We did a half hour spot while the main band had a break.

That did it for us. We decided that if we had to keep looking over our shoulders for senior officers who fancied having a go at us then we would just stop playing. As a result we never played again. Big shame.

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Do you like cop pop?

by Paul Allen



The group line-up (left to right): Roger Sparks, Colin Crawley, Alan Gough and Tony Burnett.

IT would be a good idea, said the police public relations man, to write a piece on this police pop group, and show the public that we are human.

So I went to have a look at them, playing at a police social club do, held in a barn out in the country near Hedge End . . . three detective constables and a stand-in drummer, belting out rock-and-roll.

They call themselves "Force Four," and have been in existence for about 15 months since two of them got together and found that one could play the piano and the other the guitar.

The three members of the group who are in the force are Des Roger Sparks (27), stationed at Bitterne, Southampton, and who plays lead-rhythm guitar; Alan Gough (31), from Eastleigh, on the piano; Colin Crawley (32), from Southampton Central on bass.

Own kit

Tony Burnett stands in on drums until the group can find a policeman-drummer with his own kit.

With the blessing of their Chief Constable, they play at police social evenings and dances around the area, but they find that their duty commitments — and never knowing when they may be called on because of crime — make it too difficult to take on outside engagements.

But they still encounter the question "Are you really policemen? — I wouldn't expect policemen to be up on the stage playing rock-and-roll."

All four have played in groups before they joined the force — but Force Four was born when Roger Sparks and Alan Gough got together one evening, and decided to look round for other policemen to form a group.

Time

They have bought, or made, their own equipment, and try to practise at the Police Club in Huise Road, Southampton, but time doesn't always make this possible.

Alan Gough's piano playing is something to behold. The instrument was hooked up to a speaker, but he still needed to work hard to keep the sound heard.

He told me that on one occasion when the group had a fill-in spot at the Polygon Hotel, he left the piano keyboard covered in blood from broken skin on his thumb? Colin Crawley and Roger Sparks do the singing.

Throughout

Said Roger: "We would like to be accepted throughout the Hampshire force area as a band available for functions being run by police, or kindred organisations like the fire brigade or the hospital services.

"If the Chief Constable said, as a public relations exercise, go and play where-

ever you like to promote the police force, we would welcome it."

So I left them to get on and entertain the policemen, their wives and guests in the barn, and I asked my colleague and pop writer Barry Dillon to listen and give his view of Force Four.

He writes: "I'm not going to be too critical about Force Four. After all they are an amateur outfit.

"Most groups in this category play music to please themselves. These offbeat lads in blue guarantee satisfaction for others, and that is strongly to their credit.

"What I will say, though,

is that their first three numbers—"Proud Mary," an over-long draggy instrumental, and "Yellow River"—were much too quiet.

"Maximum volume is essential, if you want inhibitions of disappear. Rock 'n' roll is not chamber music, you know.

"Mind you, it got much, much better. The lads were much more at home with some neat slices of original rock 'n' roll, and the piano playing and drumming was outstanding during this.

Fine

"They got it on in fine fashion with 'Shake, Rattle and Roll,' 'Sweet Little Sixteen,' and 'Lucille.'

"But, the most pleasing thing about Force Four is that they are a police group. Bridging the generation gap, you say.

"What nonsense! What generation gap? Everyone digs pop, or most people anyway — be it rock 'n' roll, soul, underground, or straight-laced middle of the road fodder.

"The music belongs to us all, including the police force.

Dig

"Most rock fanatics I know dig classical music. Unfortunately most classical music lovers I know, who perhaps are over the hill, say they cannot stand pop.

"Really, they should learn to be more aware. Such tunnel vision is disturbing.

"In years to come a song like 'Sweet Little Sixteen,' performed nicely by Force Four, will be of equal importance as 'Beethoven's Fifth.'

"Keep it up lads."

Things went well for a few months then in September 1973 I had an accident in the garden at home. I was hammering a masonry nail into the garage wall when a small chip flew off into my left eye. I didn't realise it at the time but during the night the pain became quite intense and Sue took me to the Eye Hospital. There a Sister examined it and saw a scratch on the surface of my eye. She gave me some anaesthetic drops which cured the pain and told me to come back in the morning to be seen by a doctor.

That I did, only to be told that a tiny piece of metal had entered through the front of my eye and was embedded in the lens. He wanted me to be admitted straight away. I persuaded him to let me go to work to organise the handing over of my work so long as I promised to come back in the afternoon. I wasn't going to argue with that, it sounded serious. Apparently, that sort of disturbance to the lens can result in the formation of a cataract. That is where the lens becomes cloudy and is the same condition that regularly affects older people.

I had to stay in hospital until the cataract "ripened" before they could operate to remove the lens. After two weeks, it hadn't developed sufficiently so they allowed me to go home. A month or two later I returned and had the lens removed. This time I was in hospital for one week. Nowadays, with modern technology, the operation is done in minutes and the patient is allowed home in an hour or so. Sue had both of hers done recently in that sort of timescale. Altogether I was off work for about 3 months.

Shortly after I returned to work I was transferred to Civic Centre CID. This was a very busy station with a wide variety of crimes to investigate. Never a dull moment, although we did dislike Saturdays as they were taken up mainly with dealing with shoplifters.

In contrast to the routine work, I was fortunate enough to have been included on a number of jobs that required the setting up of a special squad. One such occasion came about one year when the Royal Research Ship Bransfield returned from its annual journey to Antarctica. The vessel ferried staff and supplies to and from the British research bases down there. On this occasion, as he entered British waters, the master reported a serious theft had taken place on board. The ship was ordered to anchor in Cowes Roads and to wait for the Police. A squad of about six or eight officers was formed and we were ferried out to the ship on the Police Launch, Ashburton. The weather was appalling and Ashburton was bobbing about all over the place. One or two of the lads were feeling extremely queasy.

When we arrived at Bransfield we sailed round to the starboard side to try to get some shelter from the wind but the sea was even worse on that side so we returned to the port side. As we came alongside, the waves were driving the launch up and down the side of the ship by about ten to fifteen feet every few seconds. A rope ladder was thrown down from the Bransfield's deck and, one by one, we waited for our launch to rise to its highest point then, brief case in hand, we jumped onto the ladder as Ashburton disappeared downwards. At that point it was important to start climbing straight away as the launch was obviously going to be coming back up again in a few seconds. All a bit scary but we did all eventually manage to get aboard without mishap. One of the officers on Bransfield later confided that he really didn't think we were going to make it.

We began our investigation and it transpired that on its journey out through the tropics and the South Atlantic members of the crew had been allowed to keep their beers in some refrigerators that had been provided on deck for the purpose of storing research samples on the return journey. Once the ship arrived in the Antarctic, the crew were told that they were no longer allowed to use the refrigerators and the scientists, some of whom had been working

down there for more than a year, brought their samples aboard and placed them in the refrigerators to preserve them for further study back in the UK.

One day as the ship was crossing the tropics on its return journey, the refrigerators were discovered to be empty. Someone had removed all of the samples and it is presumed that they went over the side. Many of those samples formed the basis of theses being produced by the scientists for their university degrees. It was a huge scientific and personal loss and an embarrassment for the company.



After a full day on board we had a couple of good suspects but not enough evidence to arrest them. The ship was allowed to continue into Southampton but the investigation continued for several more weeks. The outcome, sadly, was that we never did get any nearer to the two suspects and they were therefore never charged with any offence. We were certain in our own minds, however, that they were the individuals responsible for ruining such a large amount of research and consequently a number of people's futures.

During 1974 I was recruited by Detective Chief Inspector Graham Swain onto a squad that was investigating a large number of lorry thefts from Southampton Docks by a London gang. The investigation was being carried out by Hampshire officers of the Number 6 District Crime Squad. My job was to collate all of the thousands of pieces of documentary evidence gathered during the investigation. I really did enjoy that. It was the biggest thing I'd been involved in and I found it extremely satisfying. I worked in the same office as the Chief Inspector and a Detective Inspector Eddie "Happy" Day and we all got on very well. They treated me like an equal. After a while they even passed to me the responsibility for issuing the order sheets for the Crime Squad officers. Most of the enquiries were taking place in Wapping and Rotherhithe so the lads were away most of the week coming back to the office on a Friday to submit their reports and to collect their work for the next week.

The whole job took many months to complete. Then eventually, one morning in late 1974, a number of premises in and around London were raided and the gang was arrested and brought to Southampton. The work then had to be stepped up a gear as there were lots more enquiries resulting from the interviews. The case went to Winchester Crown Court and we were represented by Roger Titheridge QC and his junior counsel, David Elfer. Mr Titheridge later became a Recorder and eventually a Deputy High Court Judge while Mr Elfer went on to become a Circuit Judge on the Western Circuit. They were a couple of great chaps and I got on really well with them, especially David Elfer. I was in court for the whole six weeks of the trial looking after the thousands of exhibits (mainly paper ones) and producing them quickly when required by the prosecution or the defence. The jury brought in guilty verdicts and several villains were taken out of society for a number of years.

Alan Gough – Life Story

I then went back to General CID duties at the Civic Centre Police Station until I was asked, in the summer of 1975, if I would like to serve an attachment to Special Branch. When I said, "Yes" I was asked "Why?" Now SB was a very secretive organisation within the framework of CID and in those days no-one outside it really knew much about what went on other than that it was involved with national security. I had previously served with John Dangerfield in both Vice Squad and Drugs Squad so I knew him very well. He had been on SB for a year or two at this time and I knew that he was enjoying it. I replied that, "If it suits John Dangerfield, which it obviously does, then I'm sure that it will suit me." That seemed to do the trick and I soon began working with The Branch from their Portswood office.

Chapter 8 – Special Branch and Retirement

After my three month attachment, instead of returning to Central CID, I was transferred to the Special Investigations Squad (known in the force as the SIS) which, at that time, operated from Lyndhurst Police Station. The majority of the work of this outfit was to investigate terrorist (mostly Irish and Middle Eastern) and anarchist activity in Hampshire, and believe me, there was plenty to investigate. At that time, members of SIS were not privy to some of the details of the work carried out by Special Branch so I was in quite a unique position.

I arrived in November 1975 and immediately joined a surveillance operation against members of the IRA in Southampton that culminated in December in several early morning raids and the arrest of a number of suspects who were later convicted at the Crown Court and imprisoned. They had conspired to take explosives aboard the QE2 with a view to blowing it up on the high seas. The explosives, which were recovered, had been brought down from a London cell and were stored in a shed at the foot of Albion Towers in St Mary's.

Somewhere in the region of fifteen to twenty raids were carried out at addresses in many parts of Southampton where the suspects were known to live. They were co-ordinated to take place at the same time, 6.00 a.m. I was part of a team of four headed by a Detective Sergeant or Inspector who arrived at a house on Thornhill Estate with a warrant for the arrest of one of the main players and authorising a search of the property. Repeated knocking on the front door eventually resulted in a woman appearing bleary eyed at a first floor window. We announced ourselves and said that we had a warrant. There was what seemed to be an extremely long wait before the front door was opened. I'll always remember the tension we all felt standing on the doorstep. While we waited someone nervously suggested that the suspect was probably setting up his machine gun at the top of the stairs ready for us to burst in. Fortunately, this wasn't the case and the arrest and search was completed without incident.

That was an exciting start to my three or so years on SIS. During my time there I also spent some time on a team investigating anarchist cells on a more national scale. I spent the summer of 1976 with Detective Sergeant Roger Honey following the Free Festival crowd around England and Wales. We had contact with a number of very brave undercover officers embedded in the organisations involved and we used to meet them on a regular basis to recover the information they had obtained. We were then able to liaise with the local forces to help deal with the problems these unauthorised festivals posed. We spent some weeks in the Elan Valley, based in a hotel in Rhayader, followed by a week or two in Carmarthen. We finished up in August at a festival in Seasalter near Canterbury before the festival season ended.

While in Carmarthen we befriended the local lifeboat engineer who would take Roger and me out in his own boat to fish for mackerel in Cardigan Bay. This was very productive and on our return we would meet our undercover colleagues for debrief sessions. We gave them our catch of fish which they then took back to the festival site, where they were living, and "sold" them in exchange for drugs. In this way they were able to identify a number of dealers who could then be targeted by the local police.

One day a Magistrate's Court was to be held in the village hall at Eglwyswrw to hear cases against a number of individuals who had been arrested in connection with the festival for a variety of drug offences. In an attempt identify some of the main offenders and their associates Roger and I together with a disguised camera went to the village. In view of the fact that this was a small, very quiet, rural village it was clearly going to be difficult for us to

avoid being too obvious. I sat on a wall at the entrance to a farm near to the village hall and, as luck would have it, a friendly dog immediately came from the farmyard and sat alongside me. What could have appeared more natural? I couldn't believe my luck.



On one occasion, on returning late to the pub we were staying at, there was a party in full swing. Roger and I were invited to join in and when we asked the landlady what was the reason for the party she gave us a surprising response. It seems that the health of the river was traditionally maintained under the watchful eye of, not a water bailiff, but a local poacher. Sometime recently he had died and the landlady's son had been "elected" to fill the "vacancy". Hence the celebration and the pub was packed. Obviously her son was a very popular choice.

Later, I was teamed up with Keith Matthews, a DC who had spent much of his service in the Aldershot area. Keith's knowledge of that area and his contacts there were top drawer and I was very lucky to have worked with him. We dealt with all of the SIS enquiries in the North of the County, many of them involving the Army with whom we had a very close liaison. I am unable to write about individual cases but, of course, it was not all work. We did have other stuff to do.

One of Keith's contacts worked at a chicken factory and we were able to buy chickens at a very cheap price. This was advertised verbally around the squad and each week we would take a chicken order with us and at the end of our daily enquiries we would go and collect them from the factory.

One particular day we were driving down the M3 motorway somewhere near Basingstoke on our way back to our office at Lyndhurst when the car engine blew up and we had to stop on the hard shoulder. Well, the boot of the car was full of boxes of chickens, as was the back seat. I even had boxes on the floor in front of me in the front passenger seat. We were as loaded as it was possible to get. Now we were going to have to radio for assistance but of course, we didn't want our rescuers to find out what we were doing. So, we called Headquarters, told them we were SIS and asked them to contact our Detective Chief Inspector, who happened to be one of our "customers" and to let him know that we had broken down. We explained that we had some "very delicate equipment on board," ("delicate" in SIS language being synonymous with "secret"). "Please ask the DCI to send a car to transfer this equipment which is required urgently at Lyndhurst. Once the equipment has been offloaded we will call you again and request the attendance of the breakdown truck."

This was done and the operation went like a dream with no-one outside of the SIS becoming any the wiser. Just another test for thinking on your feet.

After 2 or 3 years with the SIS, I was transferred back to “the real SB” at Portswood and remained with them for the next 10 years. During that time I was involved in many protection jobs with visiting politicians and many members of the Royal Family. I was never authorised as a firearms user because of the earlier eye injury. The main skill that I developed was in surveillance. That was my forte and I seemed to be able to get in and out of places and remain completely forgettable. That was the best period of my whole police career, much of which I cannot write about due to its nature and my commitment to the Official Secrets Act.

I recall the day on 9th May 1978 when HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother performed the ceremony at Hillier Arboretum near Romsey of handing over the care of the arboretum to Hampshire County Council. On that day she had a horse running in a race somewhere in the UK. Her personal Met Police detective told me that she was desperate to know how the horse had got on. I was able to discover that the horse had in fact won its race. By then HM was sitting with other dignitaries and her detective on a special stage while the speeches were being given. I indicated to the detective that the horse had come in first and he leaned over to HM and whispered in her ear. She looked over towards me and nodded. That was probably the nearest I ever got to a conversation with a royal.

I did get another nod from her a few years later when she attended a fund raising garden party at Broadlands as guest of Lord Louis Mountbatten. She arrived by helicopter together with her detective, a Metropolitan Police Detective Superintendent. I waited with Lord Mountbatten who greeted her and the four of us walked together to the house. HM and Lord M went into a private room and the detective and I waited in an ante chamber. The butler came and offered us a glass of home made lemonade which we accepted, it being a particularly hot afternoon. While we were still drinking, HM and Lord M emerged to make their way to the gardens where the other guests were waiting. The Queen Mother once again looked towards me and nodded. I responded with a discrete bow.

On that occasion I had spotted amongst the guests a lady who I knew to be active within an extreme left wing political organisation in Southampton. I would bet she hadn’t told her fellow politicos where she was going that day. I informed my colleague and made sure I kept close to the lady without drawing too much attention to myself.

During 1982 work was carried out to raise the Tudor warship of King Henry VIII, the Mary Rose, from the seabed in the Solent. Prince Charles, as he was then, was keenly interested in the project having dived on the site himself. For several weekends when it was expected that the ship would be raised he stayed at Broadlands in Romsey, the home of Lord Mountbatten. Each time there was a security operation put in place and each weekend I performed night duty at Broadlands. About 5 am each morning Vic, Mountbatten’s butler, would arrive from his flat in the grounds to prepare breakfast for the Prince. Having endured a rather happily uneventful night I was pleased to be able to help Vic with some of the chores. I filled the log basket and lit the fire in the breakfast lounge then I prepared a large pitcher of fresh orange juice using an electric juicer and about 20 or so oranges. I was never present, however, when Prince Charles arrived for his breakfast. Finally, on 11th October 1982, he was able to attend the successful raising of the ship.

On one occasion Lord Mountbatten escorted the authoress Barbara Cartland together with Prince and Princess Michael of Kent to a charity screening of the film Death On The Nile at what was then the Forum cinema in Above Bar, Southampton in aid of the Romsey Hospital. The film, which was produced by John Brabourne (Lord Brabourne) and Norton Knatchbull (Lord Romsey) was followed by a reception at the Mountbatten Theatre that was part of the

College of Technology in East Park Terrace. My Detective Sergeant and I were the security detail who accompanied the party throughout the event. At the end of the evening we drove in convoy back to Broadlands and as was usual when returning late we followed the principal cars into the yard at the rear of the house. My Sergeant and I got out of our car at the entrance to the yard and joined the policewoman and dog handler who had remained at the house throughout the evening. On leaving his car, Lord Mountbatten walked back across the yard towards us to shake our hands as he always did at the end of a function. Half way across he realised that Prince Michael was heading for the back door of the house. Lord Mountbatten called out, "Michael. Come and say thank you to the officers." That had the desired effect and he came and followed Lord Mountbatten in shaking our hands and thanking us for carrying out the duty.

Edward Heath was a regular weekend visitor to Hampshire during my time on SB. He would arrive on Friday evening to spend Saturday and Sunday sailing on his yacht Morning Cloud, returning to London on Sunday evening. He stayed at a sailing club premises in Hamble and whoever was the SB officer on duty at the weekend would collect him in our private cars to drive him to a local restaurant on Friday evening. Then on Saturday morning we would drive him round to the marina to meet up with his crew and board his yacht. At tea time we would pick him up again and return him to the sailing club. Sunday would be a repeat.

In 1980 Mr Heath won the Round The Island Race for the fourth time. That time it was in Morning Cloud IV. On the Sunday, he was due to sail over to Cowes to be presented with the Gold Roman Bowl. He asked my Sergeant, Keith White, and me if we would like to accompany him and his detective and crew on the trip. We were delighted and he even bought us a pint at the presentation event.

My car at that time was a Datsun Bluebird estate. Mr Heath often made a comment about having to travel in a Japanese car. This was always said in a light hearted manner and despite a reputation for being a bit moody, I found him to be quite quiet but pleasant and polite.

One of the best days was spent at Middle Wallop airfield, the home of the Army Air Corps. Each year they held an excellent air display that was open to the public. On this particular day one of the special guests was the late King Hussein of Jordan. Special Branch had a duty to protect the King during the visit. Officers from all three SB offices were involved. It was felt necessary to have an "eye in the sky" so to speak to respond instantly to reports of suspicious activity around the perimeter of the site



I was the chosen one and I spent the whole day in a Gazelle helicopter cruising the area. One of the pilots had recently returned from Northern Ireland and he needed to demonstrate to me exactly what he could do with a helicopter. Well, Alton Towers and Thorpe Park have nothing on the rides I took that day. It was absolutely brilliant. The weather was superb and he had removed the doors. We even flew over to Danebury Hill where there was a large audience who were

ready to watch the show for nothing. My pilot proceeded to give a first class display just for them. My morning pilot was involved in the flying display in the afternoon so I then had a

different pilot. His name was Peter Abbott, known to his mates as Peter Rabbit. He was no slouch either when it came to flying a helicopter. What a day. I shall never forget it.

Unfortunately, my time on Special Branch came to an end with the arrival of a new Head of SB, Mike Southwell. I had known him for many years, in fact, he was the Detective Sergeant in the Southampton SB office when I did my original attachment. Well, we just didn't hit it off. There was what they call a personality clash and there was always only going to be one winner. The most upsetting thing about my departure from SB was the way it was done.

We had earlier moved the office from Portswood to Shirley Police Station. One afternoon in January 1987 I was in Shirley High Street when I met one the DCs from Bitterne. He said to me, "How do you feel about your move to Bitterne?" I took this to be one of the many legpulls that go on between coppers on a daily basis. However, I immediately saw by the look on his face that he was not joking. He apologised if he had spoken out of turn and we talked about other things. I returned to the office and phoned our headquarters SB office to speak to our Detective Inspector, Rod Davis. He spoke to Detective Chief Inspector Southwell then denied that I was moving and told me not to worry.

I wasn't sure that I could believe him but there was little more I could do at that stage. I was unnerved though. A couple of days later I received an official notification that transferred me to Bitterne CID effective from about three days hence. I was devastated. That gave me too little time to get around to saying goodbye to all of the very valuable contacts I had made, in all sorts of areas, through the years I had been on the Branch and once I had left I knew that I would not be able to contact them again. Because of the sensitive nature of the work it was essential that contacts were protected and were not identified to each other. A group farewell do was therefore out of the question. Goodness knows what they made of my sudden disappearance.

Once I arrived at Bitterne, I discovered that my name had already been on their duty sheet for a fortnight. Southwell and Davis had obviously both known about my move, in fact they engineered it, but they denied it when asked about it. The rest of the lads I had worked with were incensed and I had a lot of supporting words from them but, of course, there was nothing of a practical nature that they could do. One of them did put in a request for a transfer out of SB but that was refused. I quickly lost touch with the Branch after that although I am still in close contact with several individuals including Keith White, Dave Hanna and John Dangerfield.

At Bitterne I soon realised that I was now completely out of my depth. CID work had changed dramatically from the way we used to work 12 years earlier. The rest of the department, including the three Detective Sergeants and the Detective Inspector, were so supportive. They all knew exactly what had happened and they did their best to help me. However, I knew that I just wasn't giving value for money any more. This was so dreadful after I had been on top of my game for so long in the Branch where, it had been anticipated by many, I would spend the remaining three years service until I retired. My health began to suffer and Sue recognised the symptoms of depression, something which had never previously affected me. I had a considerable period of sick leave and really wasn't enjoying life.

Chapter 9 – Test Valley Borough Council

Our friends, Eric and Hilary, who worked at Test Valley Borough Council, knew that I was approaching retirement from the police. In fact, I had passed the point when I was able to leave and collect a pension. One day, they told me about a new job vacancy in the Revenues Department at the Council which they thought might suit me. It was as an Inspector in the Rates Section. I contacted the Personnel Department and asked for a copy of the Job Description and an Application Form.

The description of the work sounded very interesting. Although one of the requirements was that applicants should have a working knowledge of General Rates, which I didn't have, I completed and submitted an application. Surprisingly, I was invited to Beech Hurst at Andover, the headquarters of Test Valley Borough Council, for an interview.

On the day, I went, with Sue and Lindsay, to Andover, and at the appointed time I left them to go shopping while I went to the Council Offices. The interview panel consisted of David Matthews, Head of Revenues, Beryl Caddy, Head of the Rating Section and Margaret Smith, Head of Personnel. Oddly enough, I didn't feel my usual nervousness but was confident that I would just do my best.

They gave me a detailed description of what the job entailed which really confirmed what had been in the literature they had sent to me. The questioning was fairly gentle and I was able to talk freely about how I thought my experience in the police would be an advantage in the post. Basically, the successful applicant would tour the Northern area of the council's patch looking at properties that had been reported as vacant. At that time, a vacant property, domestic or commercial, was exempted by TVBC from paying General Rates. It was therefore important that, when an empty property became reoccupied, details of the new occupier were obtained in order to start the billing process again. A further duty of the Inspector would be to examine new properties and ones that were being altered or extended so that a new or amended rating valuation could be put into effect. This required close collaboration with the Valuation Office, which is an arm of the Inland Revenue.

During the interview, David Matthews told me that in about nine months time a new post would become available which would be a promotion from the Inspector's post and he felt that it may also be suitable for me. That sounded very positive and indicated to me that the interview was definitely going well.

Even so, everything about the Inspector's post sounded encouraging. I felt that the ideal person for the job was someone with a background of dealing with people and of carrying out investigations and I was very enthusiastic about the prospect of getting it. I had no idea how many other applicants were up for interview but I have never felt so confident and well prepared in an interview either before or since.

On leaving the offices I met Sue and Lins in the Safeway Car Park in Andover then we drove out to the Rothsay Hotel on the outskirts of Andover for lunch before returning home. What a great day.

The following day, I was in the CID office at Bitterne Police Station where I shared a desk with Dave Croucher. The phone rang and Dave picked it up. He handed it over to me covering up the mouthpiece and with a quizzical look on his face. "It's Test Valley Borough Council for you", he said. It was David Matthews. "We would like to offer you the job". He

even told me that they would be prepared to start me on the middle grade of the five year salary scale. I had already done the calculations before submitting my application and, having discussed it with Sue, we had decided that financially we could survive on the lower TVBC salary plus my Police pension. So when I was offered an increased starting salary I couldn't wait to say, "Accepted and thank you very much". Dave Croucher was, of course, the first to hear my great news.

I put in my retirement form that very day giving the necessary one month's notice and from that moment on I must have had a smile on my face a mile wide.

I retired from the Police on 22nd November 1987 and began work at Test Valley Borough Council on 1st December the same year.

Two days later my boss, Beryl Caddy, bought cakes which she passed out to everyone in the section. I asked what the occasion was and was told that they always bought cakes on their birthdays. Whoops!! My first clanger. It had been my 47th birthday the day before. She might have warned me after all, she was the only one in the section who would have known my birthday. Still, I made up for it in future years buying cream cakes from Burbidges Bakery, probably the best cream cakes in the world.

I soon found my way around the area discovering lots of quaint, previously unknown to me, villages such as Facombe, Goodworth Clatford and Nether Wallop as well as the town of Andover with its perimeter of housing estates.

It took me three months to complete an inspection of all of the properties in my area of responsibility and I had completed three full inspections when I was invited to apply for the new post of Community Charge Registration Officer. The Community Charge was the Conservatives' replacement for General Rates which had always been regarded by many as unfair. The idea under the new system was that every individual would have a duty to pay something towards local services and it was due to begin on 1st April 1990. It therefore required the compiling of a register of every qualifying individual resident in the council's area.

I was successful at my interview and began in the post on 1st September 1988. That was, in effect, a promotion. I was to be responsible for the compilation of the new Community Charges Register and for the supervision of the Inspectors. Interviews were held to appoint three new Inspectors, one for the South and two for the North. The original South Inspector had resigned. Unfortunately, I was not involved in the interview process and was eventually presented with an ex-Detective Sergeant from the Metropolitan Police, Bill Meaton, who was to take the South, and two others for the North who, it transpired, had never done any form of investigative work nor had they even worked with members of the public. This was going to be difficult.

My first task was to train them, showing them the various records that had to be kept and their purpose. The new legislation was covered by numerous courses which all staff were being sent on. There were many enquiries to be completed in order to compile the first Community Charges Register. Bill Meaton was perfectly capable of carrying out enquiries on his own and he was not shy about asking for help if he got stuck. The other two, however, were something of a problem. It soon became apparent that they were both nervous about making face to face enquiries and I did my best to show them what to do by going out with them on enquiries before letting them loose on their own. One of them, the older of the two, even confessed that

he thought the job just meant going round looking at properties not talking to people! Oh boy. I never did get the quality of results from them that I needed.

I had to deal with appeals from individuals who disputed their inclusion in the register and there were lots of those appeals. This entailed initial responses in writing and either agreeing with their appeal or dismissing it. If the appellant disagreed with my decision he or she could then appeal to a Valuation Tribunal. That was a sort of court chaired by two or three lay people who would normally have had some background in the world of property valuation or the legal profession. They would be guided in the law by a clerk who was actually the legal expert.

I would be called upon to present the Council's case. During the time that the Community Charge was in force I appeared in over one hundred cases and didn't lose one. That was probably because I had done my homework. I frequently had to stay at work late preparing cases but that certainly paid off once it got to the hearing.

Although I thought that the principle had some merit, the Community Charges were a political disaster for the Conservatives. The idea was formulated as an improvement on the system of General Rates which, until 1990, was the way in which revenue was raised by local councils. Rates were based on the size and type of property and that had always been regarded as unfair in some ways, particularly where a larger, and therefore high rated, property was only occupied by a single person but a smaller, and therefore lower rated, property might be occupied by several people. The idea of Community Charges was that everyone would have to pay some contribution to the council budget. The new law was fairly complex but it also kept evolving over a comparatively short period of time with lots of case law. Also, there was no provision for 100% benefit for anyone as there had been in the General Rates. This was in fact essential for some individuals who really didn't have the funds to pay a charge. The maximum benefit that the law allowed was 80% but I believe that there were a few individuals who really could not afford the remaining 20%. The perceived unfairness caused a huge public protest against the charges and eventually after only a few years the Community Charges were replaced by the present system known as Council Tax.

There was a great deal of misunderstanding of the various aspects of Community Charges as well as erroneous information being given out by the media. One of these related to people whose work meant that they spent some time living away from their normal marital home. It was wrongly suggested by many that such people would not have to pay charges in respect of their home address.

One case involved the soldiers from Tidworth Barracks and married quarters who were sent to fight in the Gulf War. The Army and the press advised them and their families that they would not be liable for the "Poll Tax" while they were away. This was totally incorrect as far as the law was concerned and I and my boss, David Matthews, convened a meeting with some top army brass at Tidworth to explain the correct legal situation. We came to an understanding that, although the soldiers would continue to be liable, and we would have a duty to issue bills in the normal way, the Army would hold those bills until their soldiers returned. As nobody knew then how long they would be away, we would wait until their return before deciding whether or not we could legally withdraw the bills or require them to be paid. We promised that we would, in those circumstances, take a lenient view in cases of hardship. This arrangement was accepted by the Army.

A couple of weeks later I received a telephone call from a reporter who said he was phoning from The Gulf. He was complaining on behalf of soldiers out there who had received "Poll Tax Bills" on the front line from Test Valley Borough Council and he asked me to comment. It was not really up to me to comment but all of the other senior officers of the council were out that day so I briefly explained about the agreement we had made with the Army and left it at that. The next day, 12th February 1991, the Sun newspaper carried the following item.

POLL TAX ON THE FRONT LINE!



£7m box-office sensation
ing beauty
s a No 1 hit

Rob America's No 1 slot. A massive £7 million poured into box offices over the weekend after rave reviews.

Sexy Julia, 23, plays a divorcee hounded by her psycho ex-hubby.

From NICK PARKER in Al Jubail, Saudi Arabia

BRITISH troops preparing for battle in the desert have received a sickening kick in the teeth from back home — POLL TAX demands.

At least nine of Our Boys have been sent letters threatening court action unless they pay £150.

Another soldier has even had a SUMMONS delivered to his bunker. The callous demands have gutted squaddies as they gear up for a bloody showdown with Saddam's stormtroopers.

Military policeman Darren Barker got a demand at his camp in Al Jubail — 50 miles from the Kuwait border. He said last night:

"The lads are raging. All you have to look forward to is our mail and being sent this is a sickener."

"We always knew we

were liable to pay it, but not while we were out here in the desert.

"We thought they thought more of us, but obviously we were wrong."

Darren said his pals

6,300 HIT BY BA AXE

By MARK SOLOMONS

BRITISH Airways is to axe 4,300 jobs and "stand down," another 2,000 staff on half-pay, it announced last night.

The shock move is part of drastic measures to save £200 million.

It came after a day of talks between the airline's management and unions.

A spokesman said: "Most of the losses will come from management."

"Staff being asked to stand down will be recalled when business picks up again."

Unions last night BACKED the cuts. Spokesman Roy

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POLL TAX AT FRONT

Continued from Page One
factly honest, the last thing we expected was a poll tax bill."

The lads who received demands are from Tidworth barracks, Hants. Local poll tax chief Alan Gough said:

"We came to an arrangement with the Army to try to prevent these demands

"The letters would have been in white, windowed envelopes with franking marks showing the council's logo.

Wrong

"It looks as though the Army could not distinguish them from personal mail."

Army bosses admit they sent on the letters by mistake — but says soldiers in the Gulf should **NOT** have been billed in the first place.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "Obviously something has gone wrong.

"But there is no need for the soldiers to worry. Anyone out of the country for six months is not liable to pay poll tax.

.....

Even in the last paragraph a Ministry of Defence spokesman made things even more difficult for the Council with a completely incorrect announcement. The following day, the same newspaper carried the following cartoon. I guess that's me in the van. You may recall that the Patriot missile was the well known weapon being used by the West in the Gulf War to shoot down the Iraqi Scud missiles.



Council Tax is a system which tries to take the best bits of both the General Rates and the Community Charges. At its simplest, the tax is based partly on the value of the property concerned and partly on the number of individuals who live there.

Each time the system changed, my post, along with all the others in our section, ceased to exist and we then had to apply for posts in the new setup. Altogether I worked in five different posts during my time at Test Valley. I enjoyed all of them to different extents and as I developed, I learned more and more about the computer systems used in various areas of the Revenues Section. Through this I became close to the members of the I.T. section. I applied for any course that was going and I learned lots about systems that would help me in my home computing even when I retired.

Every year we had to prepare the bills which would be sent out to every household and every business. There would be a number of explanatory leaflets included with each bill and I used to bring boxes of leaflets and envelopes home for Sue to fill and box up ready for the bills to be printed and added. This was a strenuous and boring job for Sue but it introduced her to my manager who later asked her to come to work for us in the offices as a part time member of the staff. Sue was then employed doing many tasks for many of the different teams within the section. It was a good time and we enjoyed the journey to and from work together. Often, we would stop for a meal at a pub after work on our way home.

Chapter 10 – Conclusion (So Far)

Home now was at 3 Stenbury Way in the village of Butlocks Heath. We had moved from 100 The Grove in November 1983 having realised that, although we had paid off our mortgage, we could be financially better off buying a bigger house with a small mortgage which would enable us to receive a higher rent allowance from the police. The rent allowance was based on the rateable value of the house and, until then, we had not been on the maximum allowance. In addition, The Grove was becoming very congested with parked cars and was probably past its best.

Once we decided to make a move, we looked at a number of probable properties and eventually decided to buy one with four bedrooms in Upper Deacon Road. We were excited at the deal and the surveyor's report was good. We had a buyer for our house so everything seemed to be going through smoothly. Then one day we received notice that the vendors of the Upper Deacon Road house had pulled out and no longer wished to sell.

We were both really upset but it actually opened up another option. There was a new development of 20 houses under way in Butlocks Heath on the edge of Netley by the builder, A. C. English. There were to be 5 four bedroomed houses and 15 three bedroomed houses. When we had first decided to move, this development was only in the planning stage. However, it had now begun to take shape and some of the footings had been put in. We looked closely at the plans and decided that number 3 was the one for us. We tried to negotiate the price down but the builder claimed that an error had been made with the footings of number 3 which meant that it was going to be built bigger than it had been planned.

Sounds crazy doesn't it? He claimed that the 3 bedroomed houses were half a metre bigger from front to back than the 4 bedroomed houses and that they had dug the footings for number 3 at the bigger size. Now, that would mean a much bigger house, half a metre across the whole width on both floors. We had to decide whether or not to pay a deposit the following day, and we certainly didn't want to lose it to someone else. By midnight we still hadn't decided and we still thought that it might not be true. So, the only thing to do was to drive to the site armed with a torch and a tape measure. We checked the footings and they were indeed that half metre too big so the following day we paid our deposit and the house was on its way to becoming ours.

Completion on the sale of 100 The Grove arrived before the new house was completed so I applied for a police house. We were allocated a house in Effingham Gardens and we camped there living out of boxes for one month before making the move into 3 Stenbury Way on 30th November 1983. At the time of writing this (2008), we have been here for over 24 years. Neither of us ever want to move away from here but we realise that one day we will probably have to. Let's hope that day is a long way off.

We both took early retirement in December 2001 since when time has seems to have speeded up. Retired people often said to me, "I don't know how I found time to go to work, I am now so busy." Well, I didn't really believe them but now I know what they mean. I guess that Parkinson's Law comes into play, that is to say that work expands to fill the time available. However, it is certainly good to be able to do things that previously had to sit on the back burner and to do them in your own time. You can even take a break whenever you want. So here's to doing "stuff like that" for a few more years yet.

As you can gather, there have been plenty of ups and downs but, of course, that makes for a more interesting life than one that had none of these undulations. Also, most things so far seem to have turned out OK in the end. It would be difficult to select the highest of the high points as there have been so many. The high points are, of course, the ones that come readily to the forefront of the memory with the low points fading in significance. And that's exactly how it should be. It's rather like when people reflect on past summers. The "knee-jerk" memory is that they were always sunny when we were young, but then that's just the bits we all remember.

As youngsters, Les and I were brought up to be well mannered. However, "well mannered" in those days meant not only minding your "Ps and Qs" but it also included only speaking when you were spoken to. We, along with most youngsters of our time, were taught to respect authority and not to question our elders. As a result, almost everything we were told was accepted as fact. I do not wish to be too critical of our upbringing but it did actually make the transition into adulthood more difficult than it might be in today's world. I do think though that in many cases the pendulum has swung much too far in the other direction. But it is too easy to think, "If only I'd known then what I know now." The fact is that is how it was and nothing can change that. It is up to the individual how he or she deals with it and develops his or her own character and personality. In my own case, I have been very fortunate in having someone alongside me in my adult life from whom I have learned important lessons in human relationships. Sue has been, and continues to be, a very wonderful mother, a first class wife and my best friend.

Looking back, one regret I do have is that I didn't have as much input to Trevor's and Lindsay's early years as I might have done or that I would have liked to have done. Sue pretty much raised them on her own. I was busy "bringing home the bacon" as they say. That's what blokes did then. In those days, the "New Man" had not been invented and fathers were not encouraged to learn about childbirth and parenthood. In that respect, things are very different in today's world and, in my view, that's definitely for the better. I have been fortunate in seeing Trev and Lins develop as well rounded youngsters who had a growing sense of responsibility and good manners. And they have continued that development into adulthood and parenthood. Without doubt, the major credit for that has to go to Sue.

As life has taken its course, I have been fortunate enough to experience things and visit lots of places that, in my youth, I would never in my wildest dreams have thought possible. For instance, when we got married I couldn't envisage ever owning a car, never mind two! A foreign holiday was something we didn't even consider. But eventually, in about 1971, after some encouragement from Mum Gough who offered to look after Trev and Lins, we took our first holiday abroad. We went to the Arenal Park Hotel on the island of Majorca for 11 nights. I think it cost £49 each for full board. Further adventures followed and we can now look back at visits we have made to many of the world's famous places – Cairo Museum to see Tutankamun's treasures, the Pyramids at Giza, Jesus's birthplace in Bethlehem and numerous religious sites in and around Jerusalem. We have been to The Parthenon in Athens and we have even seen the full size replica in Nashville, Tennessee. We have climbed the Statue of Liberty and have waved from the windows around her crown and we have visited Ellis Island where immigrants to America were processed between 1892 and 1954. New Orleans on the banks of the muddy Mississippi, the Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee, the Horseshoe Falls at Niagara and the Canadian National Tower in Toronto have all been visited.

We have also taken our first cruise. In 2005 we sailed to the Norwegian Fjords on QE2. We especially wanted to sail on her as it was the last ship my Dad served on for his last 3 years before retiring. The scenery was stunningly breathtaking and I would return there anytime. At one point while chatting to our restaurant manager, I mentioned that my Dad had worked in the restaurant on the ship. He suggested I spoke to the managers in the Prince's Grill and in the Queen's Grill as they may have known Dad. I followed his advice and, sure enough, they both remembered him and had kind words to say. They had both been Commis Waiters under Dad in their early days at sea. He would have been very proud and pleased to have known that two of his lads had made it to those positions.

There are lots of areas where I have noticed that things have changed since my early years. Some things that were routine, prevalent or normal then would baffle youngsters today. For instance, why has white dog poo disappeared? It used to be a fairly common sight. Steamrollers, pitch, rag and bone men and Onion Johnnies have all vanished along with a penny deposit on your lemonade bottle, road sweepers and men cutting the verges back with scythes and sickles. Also, kids who contracted ringworm used to have their heads shaved and painted purple. We had one lad who had to undergo that treatment, Jennings, at Church Drive School. No-one took too much notice and he certainly wasn't an outcast.

It was always a thrill to watch the road being repaired with the steamroller being driven back and forth over the newly laid tarmac and the smell of the tar mixed with that of the steam and hot oil. These machines can now only be seen in museums, at steam fairs during the summer months or by watching repeats of the late Fred Dibner's TV programmes. At the site of roadworks there was always a pile of chunks of pitch, a black, sticky substance, hard when cold, but liquid when hot that was used in the repair work. We would break off small pieces to chew. It was a bit like chewing gum but harder and without any noticeable taste.



The rag and bone man was a regular feature. If you have ever seen the old Steptoe and Son television programmes you will know what he was. He would travel round the area with his horse and cart collecting any scrap metal or old clothes. His shouts of "Ol' Iron" and "Ragbone" were usually unintelligible but you got the drift.



Onion Johnny was the nickname given to the many Frenchmen who rode around British towns on pedal cycles selling onions that were slung in strings around their necks and over their handlebars. Sometimes you could hardly see the bike for onions.



Of all the changes that have taken place during my lifetime, the one that upsets me most is the removal of the “Service” from some of the institutions that made this country great and the envy of others. I refer to the way the Police Service, the Postal Service and the Health Service have been steered down the road of statistics and targets especially in the last ten or so years. There seems to be more time spent on gathering statistics and producing reports than doing the actual work for which these organisations exist. The problem with statistics and targets is there is always a way of manipulating the numbers to show that a particular target is being met even if, in truth, it isn’t. I’m afraid that is a bit of a hobby horse of mine so I’ll leave it there.

Shopping has changed a lot too – sometimes for the better and sometimes not. There were no Take-Aways apart from the fish and chip shop. Food would be bought almost daily as fridges were a bit of a luxury – you will remember we were “posh”, we had one in the prefab! – and freezers were non-existent. Every community had its own butcher, grocer, greengrocer and baker. There were also plenty of shops plying other trades such as hardware, cobblers and tailors. Most of these have disappeared in recent years financially driven out of business by large retail stores selling everything you can imagine. The mention of the cobbler has reminded me that I was never able to see the connection between repairing shoes and cutting keys but any shop doing one of these trades almost always does the other.

The food we eat has also changed. Some of my favourite snacks included minced beef on fried bread, marmalade on fried bread and dip butties. The second of those was especially delicious and the third was probably about the most unhealthy thing you could eat but was so

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so tasty. In case you don't know what a dip butty is I will explain. First you put some dripping or bacon fat into a frying pan to about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep and get it really hot. Drop a slice of bread into it then take it out again immediately. Plaster it with brown sauce and eat it hot while the fat is still runny before it cools down. Scrummy!

I've just "Googled" White dog poo and guess what? – there are loads of explanations. I'll leave you to find them for yourself. And on that note I'll bid you good day.

Chapter 11 – More Adventures

The year has now advanced into 2018 and there have been some exciting adventures and big moves that have taken place since I last wrote ten years ago.

In April 2008 we took a cruise on the P & O ship Arcadia to the Mediterranean visiting, among other places, Rome, Pompeii, Dubrovnik and Sicily. The Arcadia is an all adult ship and on that occasion we were told that there were 92 wheelchairs on board. It seemed that most of those were electric motorised versions and it was woe betide anyone getting in the way of one of those. They didn't stop for anyone.

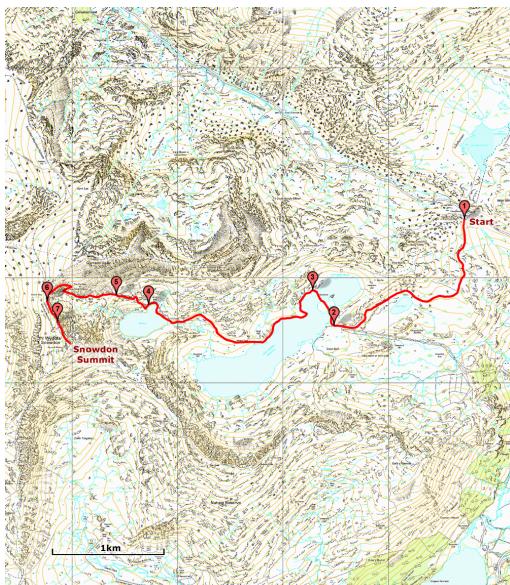
There were so many highlights on that holiday but visiting the Silvestri Crater on Mount Etna in Sicily was a top one. That huge crater was formed by an eruption in 1892 and shows just how immensely destructive the power of Mother Nature can be. We remember getting off the coach (which we had boarded at sea level in hot sunny weather) to find it bitterly cold and very windy.

Later that year we made another visit to Oakville to visit Trevor, Jean, Ellie & James then in May the following year we were back on board the Arcadia. This time we visited the Baltic Capitals of Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Tallinn, St Petersburg and Helsinki with a call at Bruges on the return home. All were interesting but the outstanding place was St Petersburg. I had never thought that I would be able to visit Russia bearing in mind my previous occupation. The opulence of The Catherine Palace named after the wife of Peter the Great, and the thousands of art treasures in The Hermitage were stunning. It's no wonder there was a revolution when ordinary Russians were so poor.

The following years saw us make more visits to Oakville and further cruises. We began with 5 nights as a taster on the new Cunarder, Queen Elizabeth. Then in May 2011 P & O's Azura took us to the Central Mediterranean visiting Olympia, the original home of the Olympic Games. The highlight of that trip for both of us was, without doubt, Venice. Although there was an expensive boat trip available from the ship's berth to St Mark's Square, we decided to walk – an excellent decision. We walked alongside the Grand Canal with its dozens of working boats along with tourist boats. It was like a watery M27 in rush hour. Our route also took us through a network of narrow streets and alleys crossing various canals where gondoliers plied their trade.

The most unforgettable part of that visit was, in fact, the leaving. As the ship glided slowly along the lagoon past the city and the mouth of the Grand Canal the speakers on board played Time To Say Goodbye sung by Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman. That was followed by Nessun Dorma sung by Luciano Pavarotti. Absolutely beautiful.

In 2012 as an early 50th wedding anniversary treat we booked a week at a large barn conversion on the outskirts of Llanberis in Snowdonia. This was big enough to accommodate the whole family and we had a great time with Trev, Jean, Ellie & James and Lins, George & Victoria. On 7th August I managed to cross off an item from my "bucket list". Together with Lins & Trev, I walked (and scrambled) to the summit of Snowdon by the Miner's Track. We took three and a half hours to reach the top and, after a drink in the café, the descent down the main route into Llanberis took 3 hours. A long, hard day but so worth the effort. The views were spectacular.



April 2013 took us to Barcelona, Florence, Pisa and La Corunna on the Oceana then in September of the same year we returned to the Norwegian Fjords on the Oriana.

December 2016 saw the beginning of a major change for Sue and me. Out of the blue we received a flyer through the letter box at 3 Stenbury Way advertising a new McCarthy & Stone retirement development at Hamble on the site of the former Harrier pub. Although this had not been in our plans we decided to be “nosey” and pay the place a visit.

We met the sales lady, Michaela, a very friendly, almost over the top, huggy person, who showed us a number of two bedrooned apartments. Well, we were immediately impressed with what we saw and after plenty of discussion and another visit we negotiated the purchase of apartment number 22. Selling 3 Stenbury Way therefore became a priority. However, we were extremely fortunate when Trev & Jean offered to lend us the funds to bridge the gap between buying and selling. Their generosity brought tears to Sue’s eyes.

We went ahead and on 27th January 2017 22 Folland Court became ours. Then the work really started. Downsizing from a four bedrooned house to a two bedrooned flat was never going to be easy but we were very fortunate in some respects. Nephew Jon was preparing to set up home with his girlfriend, Sarah and they were delighted to take much of the dining room furniture. The most difficult thing for me was clearing the shed and garage. What tools and equipment should I keep? In the end the decisions were made. The house sale eventually completed on 26th July 2017 to Keith & Angie Scarrott.

During this period we realised that we would also have to relinquish the caravan. We advertised it and received interest from a couple from Worthing. They came to view it and agreed to buy it. However, they later discovered that they were unable to source a towbar for their imported Toyota Estima. After further discussion and a test drive they agreed to buy both the caravan and our Vauxhall Vectra which we had also planned to sell at some point. How lucky were we?

We later replaced the Vectra with a one year old Skoda Rapid automatic with which we are very pleased.

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We have now lived here at Folland Court for almost a year and we both realise we made exactly the right decision at the right time of our lives. We enjoy the communal activities and the walks into Hamble village with lunches at The Victory pub and tea at the café on the beach. There is also the convenience of Lins and Victoria living close by while Lins works at the Netley Police HQ and Victoria attends Hamble School. We have also reduced our car ownership to one, the Skoda Rapid, having sold Sue's Vauxhall Astra.

Life is good.

Of course, increasing age has brought with it some health issues that have had to be dealt with. In 2003 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and was told that it has spread outside the prostate into the surrounding tissues but that it was not in the bones or lymph nodes. My first reaction was "What can I do about it?" The consultant suggested a number of options, none of which I completely understood so I asked him, "If it were you what treatment would you choose?" His answer took me to a course of 30 radiotherapy sessions followed by three years of hormone treatment. Initially that was a daily tablet but once it was clear that I was having no adverse reaction it was changed to an injection of a pellet into my abdomen every three months. A couple of the downsides of the treatment are that the breast tissue swells and becomes quite painful and you get the uncomfortable hot flushes such as the ladies get following the menopause. The nurse used to laugh and say, "Well now you know what it's like for us!" when she gave the injection.

I have been very fortunate and all treatment finished in 2007. I now have a blood test to check my PSA level every six months and so far it has remained at a low safe level.

I have always tried to think of my glass as being half full rather than half empty and I'm sure a positive attitude helps in these situations.

In February 2013 I suffered a detached retina in my left eye, the same one that had had the accident back in the 70's although I think that was probably coincidence. A number (about 8) procedures were carried out under local anaesthetic over the subsequent three years to put things right. The first time I was really quite nervous but there really was nothing to worry about. In fact, these operations became truly fascinating as well as almost painless. Some occasions I could "see" and image of the tools the surgeon was using even though the eye and surrounding muscle had been fully deadened. The operations are carried out through a microscope using very tiny tools.

The vision is not brilliant but at least I can see so once again the glass is half full.

When I hear stories of the health problems some others, including friends, have had and are having to cope with I am reminded of how very fortunate I am.

Sue and I are also lucky in another way. We are still able to meet up with Sue's sisters and brother together with each of their spouses for lunches several times a year. We also have many friends who we have been close to for many years and who we see for lunches on a regular basis. With one exception who passed away recently, Pete Smith, we are all still alive and kicking. Long may that continue.

Chapter 12 – Now 2023

In Chapter 11 I wrote about our 50th Wedding Anniversary. Well, another ten years have passed and it is now the year of our 60th Anniversary. Rather than having a big party where you don't sometimes get to speak with everyone, we decided to have separate celebratory gatherings with special groups of family members and friends.

Most important of these was that we were able to arrange for family members Trevor, Lindsay, Jean, Ellie, James and Victoria to join us for a whole week at a rented property in Somerset from 29th July until 5th August. It began by us searching the internet for somewhere that would cater for at least 8 people. We found New Park Farm near Wincanton and Bruton using the website vrbo. It is a 17th Century farmhouse that has been extended in 60 acres of meadows owned by Amanda and Charlie Ellingworth. It could actually accommodate up to 16 people. There are three large lakes for wild swimming and boating, a yurt for bbqs or teenage sleepovers, a sauna, gym and super fast broadband.

Ola gave us the whole tour when we arrived and in the boot room where there were lots of outdoor coats, hats and wellington boots she emphasised that we could use any of them if we wished. Trev and Ellie took up the option on several occasions and looked very much the country gentleman and lady. We all made good use of the boots when walking to the ponds across the fields where the cows lived.



Sue and I were a little concerned that the younger members of our party may become bored but in the event that wasn't the case. Everyone claimed it was one of the most enjoyable and relaxing holidays they had ever had. In fact we only went out from the house very few times.

During our stay we had a pizza night in what we named "The Baronial Hall" a large well appointed dining room.



Another evening we had a horse race night using a DVD brought by Lindsay. That was lots of fun even though we weren't betting actual money. Trev was designated the Fire Marshall and he attended to the log fire in whichever room we were using. He also did the barbecue cooking. On one evening, James cooked a beautiful chicken dinner, even creating a separate gluten free one for Lins and Victoria.

One of the more interesting aspects was that the house was full of photographs, paintings and family albums which we were told we could peruse. It soon became apparent with a little

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research that Amanda was in fact the granddaughter of Lord Louis Mountbatten. Her mother was his daughter Patricia and her brothers were the twins Nicholas and Timothy Knatchbull. Nicholas was killed along with Lord Mountbatten and others when his boat Shadow V was blown up by the IRA in County Sligo, Ireland. Timothy together with their mother and father were badly injured. Among the photographs was one of Amanda and Charlie's wedding. In the picture with them are Prince Charles (as he then was), Prince Edward, Lord and Lady Romsey and even Her Majesty The Queen.

Before we were aware of this family connection and in the lead up to the holiday, Amanda telephoned and suggested creating a WhatsApp group consisting of herself, Ola, the housekeeper, and me which would make for ease of communications. An excellent idea that she then followed through. From time to time she messaged via the app to ask if there was anything they could do to make our stay more enjoyable. The whole contact was very friendly and thoughtful. We got to the point of calling her, privately, my "new best friend".

Charles Ellingworth is an author who writes in The Times newspaper. Two of his novels were left in every bedroom with the invitation to take them home as gifts. This we did and having read the first, Silent Night, a WW11 romance which I really enjoyed, I am looking forward to reading the second, A Bitter Harvest.

Sue and I can't imagine a better way to have celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary with our wonderful family. Lindsay together with Trev's input organised the production of a wonderful book of photographs tracing Sue's and my life from babies to now as a keepsake.



On our return home I wrote to Amanda & Charlie to thank them and to mention my Special Branch background which had brought me into contact with her grandfather, Lord Mountbatten, and his guests. I remarked on the fact that he was always regarded by us as such a gentleman, always making a point of thanking us at the conclusion of any event. The following was the lovely reply Amanda sent:-

Dear Alan and Sue, Thank you SO much for your lovely letter, and for the photo of you all you sent my whatsapp. It is a relief to know that the weather had not marred your week together. The house is still ringing with the lovely atmosphere you all left behind. The fact that you knew my grandfather is a lovely 'full circle', he would have been tickled pink knowing we had reunited in this way! Thank you for all the care you took of him and his guests, to keep them safe, something that as it turned out was not an easy thing to do. He was always mindful that the

people involved in protection where themselves often putting themselves at risk. Of course he would want to thank you personally. But it is nice to hear and i will share that with my family. Sending many good wishes to all of you, and have a wonderful cruise in September, your 60th in Lerwick - how perfect!

How do you follow that?

Well it was time for something just for the two of us and on 7th September we boarded the Fred Olsen vessel Bolette for a Scenic Britain Cruise of 11 nights. The itinerary included Guernsey, Isles of Scilly, Belfast, Stornoway, Kirkwall and Invergordon before returning to Southampton. A call at Lerwick in the Shetlands was cancelled due to severe 70 mile an hour gales in that area. In the event we spent that day cruising round the Inner Hebrides in beautiful calm sunshine before getting back on schedule the following day at Kirkwall.

We were allocated seats on a table for six at the Bloomsbury Restaurant. We had decided beforehand that we would try the restaurant but would probably take most of our meals in The View buffet restaurant. It turned out that two of the six never did turn up but the other two, Americans Dennis and Sherrie Beasley were really good company. So we ate there every night. Dennis was a retired Brigadier General from the US Air Force. He used to fly Hercules aircraft and had served in Vietman, Afghanistan and Iraq. A very interesting chap. I was able to talk to him about my night flight in a Hercules and my day in the helicopter at Middle Wallop Air Show. We were also able to discuss stuff that we probably couldn't in other company.

Sherrie was a lovely lady and it transpired that the day of our wedding anniversary, the 14th, was also their 63rd anniversary. What a coincidence. That evening the waiters all gathered round our table and sang "Congratulations" and produced a large chocolate cake. On 17th they gathered round again to sing "Happy Birthday" to Dennis as it was his 83rd.



The cruise was the most relaxing and enjoyable time and we both agreed that we could easily do it again. On our return home the flat was decorated with an anniversary banner and Lins had, once again, organised another book of photographs, this time documenting our holiday at New Park Farm.

The post also included a special card of congratulations from King Charles and Queen Camilla, again organised by Lins.

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My wife and I were so pleased to hear that you are celebrating your Diamond Wedding anniversary on 14th September, 2023. This brings you our warmest congratulations and heartfelt good wishes on this happy occasion.

Mr. and Mrs. Alan Gough

Onwards now to new adventures