THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

DOUGLAS MATHER

"Qui N'oublie pas son passe vit deux fois."

I was born on the 11th February 1917, the youngest child of Ernest and Connie Mather at Fairlawn, Wilmslow, Cheshire. In those days it was customary to be delivered at home by the family doctor and in my case this was Dr. Finney a great friend of the family who often came for a glass of sherry on a Sunday. Following my birth our family already consisted of Jack, thirteen years my senior, Joan a year younger than Jack, Betty six years older than me and Gordon three years older. A son Jonathan had died in infancy and was born after Joan. My father had a good job in the textile industry in Manchester with a firm called the Fine Cotton Spinners and Doublers Association with whom he served for 40 years and after managing one of their large mills became a Director of the company. He left Manchester Grammar School at the age of 16 and went to Hamburg to serve as an apprentice with Elder Dempster, a Liverpool Shipping Company, and became friendly with Jonathan Holt from Oxton, nr Birkenhead. He later married Jonathan's sister Constance, my mother, and Jonathan married my father's sister Olive. Dad came from a large family who lived in Eccles, outside Manchester. My grandfather James Chadwick Mather was the first Mayor of Eccles and opened Barton Bridge.

My childhood was a happy one. My parents were well off and we lived in good style. As I have indicated my father had a well paid job but no capital, but my mother was the eldest daughter of a pioneer in the West African trade who from humble beginnings had built up a prosperous family business, whose headquarters were in Liverpool. As a result the Holt family had been well educated and after the death of my grandfather each of the eight surviving children were left a considerable amount of money.

Our home, Fairlawn, still standing to-day, was a Victorian semi-detached house built on two floors with a nursery playroom on the first floor. There was no electricity in those days in the house so we had to rely on gas, lamps and candles. I remember as a boy being frightened by shadows cast by people carrying candles up the stairs at night past my bedroom door and had to have a night-light burning by my bedside. The house had a large garden with a grass tennis court and at the bottom of the garden there was a wood which my father eventually purchased. The wood was a source of great joy and fascination to us children. It skirted about six houses and gardens adjacent to our own and at the end of the wood was the 'Far Garden" which consisted of a field later turned into a garden and also a pond. On the other side of the Far Garden and pond there was a house called 'Huntershill'

Part 1

The Pre-War Years

FORWARD

I have enjoyed writing my memoirs. This is because most of them have been written in Provence. For some years I was privileged to stay at the home of Alice and Hans Buder for one week in August. They own a property in the middle of some glorious country a few miles from Montelimar. It is extremely peaceful and for the majority of my visits the weather has been perfect. It is usually very warm but there is plenty of shade under the trees in the garden and one can cool off in the large swimming pool built some years ago.

My life seems to have conveniently divided itself into four parts. Pre 1939-45 war years, the war years themselves, the years after the war and finally retirement. Each part has been quite distinct. The second World War changed everything so drastically as did I suppose the first one. Before the war life seemed so orderly and secure provided of course one possessed sufficient money. During the war one really did not know what was going to happen and it was impossible to plan for the future. After the war we tried to make up for lost time and to live as we had done pre-war but it was a different world and it became more and more difficult to retain the old standards of behaviour and discipline. Men who for so long had reigned supreme found their authority challenged by women and children and to-day are automatically expected to share quite rightly some of the household chores and iron their own shirts. I was surprised that I did better than I expected during my time in the Royal Navy although I was never really cut out for that kind of life. During my time in John Holts the part I most enjoyed was trading in West Africa although I was happy running our ships. Looking back now I was extremely fortunate to retain my job until retirement. Following two recessions the Head Office Staff in Liverpool is now reduced to a handful and there would be no place for me.

Douglas Mather

Provence, France
August 14th 1991

which belonged to the Rodier family who were our greatest friends and to whom we became related when my brother Jack married Poppy Rodier, the middle of the three Rodier daughters. Mark, my best friend was the youngest of two sons and only a month younger than myself. In addition to the wood there was a river flowing through the bottom (the Bollin river) which after leaving the wood flowed through a waterfall and this of course was an added attraction. As you can imagine we got up to all sorts of mischief in these surroundings. One favourite pastime was to scale the fences separating the gardens skirting the wood and thus passing through the bottom of some six gardens before reaching our Far Garden, often chased by irate gardeners. In the wood itself, we often pitched camp charging about naked by the river sheltered by huge dock leaves.

In those days servants were an integral part of the family and they slept up on the top floor. Gordon and I had a nurse for many years, Nancy Cox who had a boyfriend called Stanley Dowd who regularly turned up on a motor bike. In addition there was a cook, parlour maid and gardener. The latter was one Sam Acton, a wonderful character and friend. I can remember him now getting mad with Gordon and myself firing off cork pistols over the top of his broody hens sitting on eggs - who wouldn't? Also every Guy Faulks Day Sam would prepare a huge bonfire in the Far Garden for an assembled crowd of family and friends and once when he was up a ladder putting the finishing touches to the bonfire, some idiot put a light to a well petrol soaked bottom and poor old Sam really had to jump for it.

As a child I always loved the maids, sitting on their laps and getting them to read to me and being the youngest of the family, I was horribly spoilt by my mother whom I adored. Every morning I used to jump into my parents bed and snuggle up to my mother much to my father's annoyance. Gordon and I had the bedroom next to theirs and must have given them a pretty thin time. One of our escapades was to put the mattress over the back of the bed (beds being constructed with a board at the back as well as the front) and take part in the Grand National Beechers Brook Steeple Chase frequently brought to an end by an irate father. I had lots of friends in Wilmslow and we had plenty of children's parties, particularly around Christmas time when all kinds of games and entertainment such as conjurers and magic lantern were organised for us. One of the best parties was always held at the Eadie's house. They had a large house and garden situated in Wilmslow Park and I used to go there often to play with their daughter Janet, who later married my brother Gordon. Peter Eadie and his wife were Scottish and a most kind, generous and hospitable couple. Peter Eadie a tee-totaller, was a wireless enthusiast and would sit for hours in front of a whistling apparatus rushing out now and then to announce that he had New York on the air. Mrs. Eadie was a great favourite and very easy to get round so we were up to all kinds of mischief in her house. She lived to a ripe old age and would often recall those adventures in her house called 'The

Towers' because of the Tower which we used to climb up in and survey the surrounding countryside.

The majority of my family went to the local kindergarten in Wilmslow run by a couple of mistresses called Miss Mead and Miss Barber. Mark Rodier and I used to cycle to school and around the village as there was very little traffic in those days. I also took piano lessons with a Miss Osbaldiston who was very pretty. I think I really enjoyed going to see her rather than playing the piano which was a pity because my family were very musical. Dad played the piano very well, classics of course, although he could play 'I wonder where my Baby is tonight', but in classical style. Jack played the piano, Joan also and the ukulele, Betty the violin and Gordon the piano and french horn and trumpet. He could play the piano by ear and after returning from a musical in Manchester, within half an hour he could play one of the songs out of the show - it was a great gift. He was equally good on the french horn a difficult instrument at the best of times and took part in many a musical performance at school and afterwards in local orchestras.

Our mode of transport for family outings was by motor bike and side car, Dad driving the motor bike with Gordon behind him and mother and I in the side car. Every time Dad came to a steep hill we had to get out and push the motor bike up the hill before resuming our journey. Our favourite outing was a picnic in the Goyt Valley in the Derbyshire hills between Macclesfield and Buxton. Dad eventually bought a Daimler car but when he made his first drive he backed into the rockery by mistake, damaged the car and never drove again. A chauffeur was therefore engaged for this purpose.

Jack and Joan and to some extent Betty played little part in my life at that time. They were always away at boarding school but Gordon of course a constant companion. He went off to prep school at the age of eight and I followed him three years later. Stancliffe Hall was situated half way up a mountain near Matlock in Derbyshire. There were about 60 boarders in the school coming from surrounding counties. The school was run by Messrs. Franklin and Fitzherbert together with three or four masters, a matron and a lady teacher. Franklin was married and had two daughters, one about my age who took part in our dancing classes. Fitzherbert was a bachelor and was, I believe, related to the Earl of Stafford. Also at the school at that time was my cousin Fred Davy, the son of my mother's sister, Aunt Dossie who lived in Lincolnshire.

There were many activities going on at the school in addition to games, such as Boy Scouts and long walks and camping up on the moors at the back of the school. In winter there was plenty of tobogganing and slides on ice and there always seemed to be an abundance of snow and ice on the mountain side. Visits by parents were

infrequent and we were left in the hands of our masters to get on with our education in a disciplined society enforced by the use of the cane if we broke the rules. The food was good and we slept in pleasant airy dormitories and had regulated bath nights supervised by matron. The highlight of the week was the giving out of tuck after Sunday lunch. All chocolate and sweets were pooled and doled out by one of the masters. At the end of term our chauffeur was sent to collect Gordon and I by car and it was always very exciting to wake up early and find the chauffeur Tom Dearlove waiting for us, having got there by six o'clock. Throughout our school life Tom continued to take us back to Stancliffe and Uppingham and collected us at the end of term and later on our departure was celebrated by lighting up cigarettes which Tom had brought with him from Wilmslow.

Every August the family took off for a summer holiday, the most exciting of which was a visit to Brittany which we did twice. Getting down to Dover by car in those days was quite a journey and there was a night stop at the Lygon Arms at Broadway before catching the boat from Dover to Calais the next evening. Sailing off in the dark was a most exciting experience, as was the foreign accents and life style of the French on arrival at our hotel. Other holidays were spent in hotels near Bournemouth, Devon and Borth in North Wales, often accompanied by the Davy family but the majority of our holidays were spent at Trearddur Bay, Anglesey. Dad rented a house for the months of July and August and our cook and maids would come with us together with car and chauffeur. Friends and relations came to stay and a boat was always hired from Llwelyn, the well known local fisherman. We had of course to provide our own entertainment in the evenings as we did at home, there being no TV or radio. Amateur dramatics, musical evenings and various kinds of games kept us all occupied.

Every year sometimes at the New Year or Easter but usually in September, we went to Lincolnshire practically always to stay with Auntie Dossie and the Davy family. My Grandfather John Holt when he retired from business in Liverpool lived at Broughton Grange, near Brigg, a farm which he had purchased many years previously and which was used by the Holt family as a country retreat from their home in Birkenhead. My father and mother were married at Broughton in 1903. My grandmother continued to live at Broughton Grange after John Holt's death and we used to visit her there and also at her London house in Regents Park. She was quite a formidable old lady, visits were very formal and I had the impression that she was not a very warm person or maybe she was not particularly attracted to me. She was extremely rich enjoying an enormous income and in addition to the house in London possessed two Rolls Royces and a chauffeur called Henry Crouch to whom she was devoted. Needless to say Henry took advantage of the position and was well known to take a swig at the bottle. John Holt and his wife are buried at Broughton Church together with members of the Holt family. The church is full of

gifts donated by members of the Holt family in memory of their loved ones. Several members of the family were christened and or married at Broughton and I myself spent my honeymoon there in 1942. Visits to the Davy family were usually associated with cub hunting in September, shooting and other country pursuits. For twenty years after the war my two brothers and I kept up our links with Lincolnshire returning annually to shoot partridges, pheasants and duck with cousins who continued to live and work there. Two large family gatherings with the Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa as their base have also taken place since the last war.

Surprisingly we did not have very much contact with Dad's family except three maiden aunts, Amy, Amelia and Laura, also Olive who had married Uncle Jonathan Holt and Bee who had married Percy Kendal. They had a son Alan who was at Uppingham with Jack. Dad was one of the younger members of a very large family. The two eldest brothers had emigrated to Canada and one sister I believe in America. I remember that Dad had no use for his younger brother who was a steward on one of the Cunard ships running out of Liverpool and was always sponging off him. After Dad's death he continued to write begging letters to Jack. I think that I only met him once but I remember he played the piano beautifully. The maiden aunts were wonderful people living together in a small house in Albert Avenue, Sedgeley Park, near Bury. They made toffee in bars and parkin cake which they religiously sent off to Stancliffe Hall each term accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope for Gordon and I to acknowledge receipt. Auntie Amy lived the longest and was present at my wedding.

Every Sunday at Wilmslow the family attended church at St. Bartholomew's. Afterwards we would walk home calling at the house of an old lady called Fanny Ward. Auntie Fanny as we called her came from Lincolnshire and was an old friend of my grandmother. I never quite understood why she came to live in Wilmslow. On arrival home we sat down to the traditional Sunday lunch of roast beef and yorkshire pudding followed by apple tart and cream, all of course cooked and served to us by the staff as they are nowadays called. One family retainer I have not mentioned was the sewing woman Miss Evans who came every week from the Manchester area to do all our sewing and mending. She was a real Victorian character and dressed accordingly in hat, a severe long dress and boots. Her constant topic was a reference to somebody or other being 'interred' i.e. being buried and her favourite expression to me was 'Ee Mister Douglas you mustn't do that.' In addition to cooks and maids etc. we always had a succession of dogs, cats and parrots from West Africa. Jack and Joan had numerous school friends to stay. Joan had gone to Cheltenham Ladies College and Betty followed but was not happy there and left to go to Winceby House near Hastings with Wendy Hiller, who later became a famous actress. Her father was a Director of the Fine Cotton Spinners and a colleague and friend of Dad.

As a child I had adenoids and tonsils very badly. Dad was averse to operations and so the matter was left to the last moment and by that time they were in a very poisonous condition and apt to send me into a coma. They were eventually removed by the local doctor on the table in the playroom, but I always feel that I would not have started to snore at a tender age had they been taken out earlier. Certainly none of the other members of the family snored. Other youthful ailments included a very bad dose of jaundice and diphtheria, which was passed on to Betty and myself, apparently by Dad, who although he did not get it himself, was the carrier. I also broke my wrist twice which was very painful. Gordon however caused the greatest anxiety by swallowing a halfpenny and had to be rushed off to hospital.

One is often asked what are your earliest memories. Mine was attending a wedding as a page boy with Mark Rodier, photos showing us about the age of four or five. I can remember playing hide and seek on the lawn at Fairlawn as a child. The weather always seemed to be hot and sunny and coloured tents had been put up. I also remember attending the Great Exhibition in London in 1924 and falling asleep in a tent showing a film on textiles, having tramped round the Exhibition all day. Later I remember very well attending the International Boy Scout Jamboree in Arrowe Park, Birkenhead, attended by Baden Powell, the Chief Scout who was presented with a car and trailer. It rained continuously during the Jamboree and the ground was covered in mud through constant walking by those attending from all over the world. We took off our shoes and stockings and walked barefoot.

In December 1929 our world was turned upside down by the death of my mother. She was the dominant personality of the family and my father was completely lost without her. She brought us up in a loving and organised way of life where we lacked nothing, and to her of course I was always her baby. The news was brought to me by the Headmaster at Stancliffe Hall. I remember being completely stunned and utterly devastated. On arrival home my father greeted me with outstretched arms as we tried to comfort each other. Mother suffered from goitre in the neck which to-day is not a very serious condition, however an operation was delayed until it was too late and by that time my mother was so weak that she never recovered from the operation. Gordon and I did not attend the funeral service and burial at St. Bartholomew's Church in Wilmslow. Prior to the funeral the coffin had been placed on top of the billiard table in the billiard room of our new house in Fulshaw Park, situated between Wilmslow and Alderly Edge. The billiard room was of course locked but it was customary in those days for close friends and relations to pay their respects to the dead before burial. Gordon and 1 out of curiosity climbed over the roof and were able to view the coffin from a sky light above the billiard table. Dad ordered a head stone for the grave from the quarry at the back of Stancliffe Hall School and he himself was eventually laid to rest beside her in the

same grave. He loved my mother very much and although only fifty two at the time of her death, never married again.

I spent a lot of my time in the kitchen with the cook Eliza and two maids. Often a boyfriend who was courting one of the girls would appear and sit around looking very gauche and uncomfortable, much to our amusement. Eliza herself was not married but had two illegitimate children. The parrot was kept in the kitchen and with his many imitations added to the fun and games. I also frequently visited Tom Dearlove and his wife Lily in their cottage at the back and out of observation from the house was able to smoke cigarettes without anyone's knowledge. We had an excellent gardener called Nickson who won prizes at all the local horticultural shows. He kept the garden straight with the aid of a garden boy and Tom, the chauffeur part time. Tom infact always cut the grass.

At the time of my mother's death, Jack who was engaged to Poppy Rodier, had to be recalled from a business posting in West Africa. Joan who was also engaged to Tom Buxton had to postpone her marriage in order to look after the family and in particular myself. This she did in her usual unselfish and competent manner, never complaining although no doubt Tom was none too pleased. He used to come round in the evenings and discuss politics with Dad and although the Buxton family were old friends of ours, Dad and Tom sadly never really hit it off together.

In the September before my fourteenth birthday, I followed Gordon to Uppingham School and entered the same house as Gordon and Fred Davy who was a house prefect at the time. This was Redgate, one of the then thirteen houses attached to the school and situated on a hill less than a mile from the school buildings. Redgate was built rather like a prison, but each boy had a study to himself except for four new boys who had to share a study for two. The lavatory was somewhat primitive, there being no water closet but only sand and a bucket. There was a large garden attached to the house which we were allowed to use and a field with a tennis court at the back. There must have been about forty or so boys in the house and the housemaster was the Reverend Fergus McNeile, married to a large Danish woman who was known as the Great Dane. They had three daughters and a son who was unfortunately born mongrel. We had a matron who played a major part in our lives, a houseman called Willy and several maids who waited on table and made our beds etc. The house was run by the house prefects known as 'Pollies', Fergus McNeile or Fergie as he was called took little part in house activities, although presumably he was consulted on some matters. In any case all beatings by the Pollies were entered in the beatings book together with the reason for the beating. This took place in the changing room where one had to bend over and receive six of the best - an experience in my case which I took great care not to have repeated. For two years Fagging also took place and one was called upon to carry out all kinds

of errands and duties on behalf of the Pollies. I was happy at Uppingham and enjoyed the organised life of the school. There were so many activities to take part in even more in the school to-day and of course I particularly enjoyed the games. Although I was not brilliant at any one game, I was competent at most and therefore able to take part with enthusiasm and some measure of success. Academically I was not very bright, my only prize being that of top of the bottom form and I never reached the sixth form. However I obtained four credits in the school certificate and passed into Oxford at the second attempt - not a very great achievement in those days.

I went up to Oxford in October 1935 at the age of eighteen. The headmaster of Uppingham at that time, J.F. Wolfenden, who afterwards became Lord Wolfenden asked me why I intended to go to the Queen's College. I told him that my two brothers had gone to Balliol but I had been advised not to go there as I was unlikely to pass the entrance exam and I therefore chose Queen's. Unbeknown to me, Wolfenden had been associated with Queen's and was none to pleased with my reason for going there. Gordon infact had been sent down from Balliol at the end of his first year. He gained a blue in rugger as a Freshman which was a great achievement but caused him to neglect his work. It was a pity because he had a good brain as well as excelling himself at games and music.

To me Oxford was a wonderful experience. For the first time in my educational life I was free to do as I pleased provided I was in college or rooms by a certain time in the evening. I had my own sitting room and bedroom and a scout to look after me. I could organize a breakfast or dinner party to be held in my rooms and order my requirements of food and wine from the kitchen. I joined various clubs and societies as well as taking part in college games. I played for the college at rugger and tennis and was captain of the (Imperial Quondams) College Village Cricket team. We toured a number of villages playing cricket on the village green and retiring to the village pub at the end of the match - it was tremendous fun. Don Bradman was our President and when the Australians visited Oxford at the time when I was captain, I wrote to Bradman asking him to dinner. (Bradman was a famous Australian cricketer.) He declined but wrote me a very nice letter signing off 'Yours ever Don Bradman' which I have kept as a momento. I made some very good friends at Oxford. One close friendship that has lasted to this day with John Stokes who eventually became an M.P. We endeavour to meet up annually and attend the college Old Boys dinner. The highlight of the summer term was the Commem Balls. Queen's had one every year at the end of May's eights week and other colleges in June, just before the end of term. We danced all night to some fabulous bands and then took our girls in a boat on the river before a champagne breakfast at some pub or restaurant on the river banks. I was also fortunate in having an uncle who lived only a few miles outside Oxford. I spent many a Sunday

at his home and in addition he taught me how to shoot and provided a rough shoot for me and some undergraduates. This uncle, Stanley Holt was the youngest son of my grandfather John Holt. He never did a stroke of work all his life and lived the life of a country gentleman. His youngest son David came up to Oxford in my last year.

Alas I had such a good time at Oxford that my work suffered. At the end of the first year we were obliged to pass an exam in order to stay on for another two years, but this was not very difficult. I then went on to study History for an Honours Degree. My tutor was Lord Elton, a friend of Ramsey McDonald and a Labour Peer although I do not think he was any more Labour than I was. At any rate he sent his son to Eton and the son only recently served in Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Government. History of course was a very wide subject covering many centuries. Undergraduates went to their tutor twice a week and he would lay down a programme to be followed and advise which lectures to attend on a particular subject. He would also set examinations over a period to monitor progress, otherwise it was up to the individual to get on with it as he pleased. For my part I was not used to working on my own and I found it difficult to concentrate with so many distractions. In particular, an evening visit to the Buttery where the beer was very strong usually put an end to any thoughts of working after dinner in Hall. As a result with games in the afternoon and relaxation at the week-end, I was lucky if I averaged four or five hours work per day. This was insufficient particularly in my case. I had hoped for a third class degree or at worst fourth class, but in the end had to be satisfied with half a pass degree. It was customary to come up for one more term to complete the Pass Degree but by then arrangements had been made for me to join the family firm of John Holt and Company in Liverpool and on 1st September 1939 I reported for duty.

At home during my school and Oxford days a lot of things had happened. Jack and Joan had married and started a family and Betty had taken over the running of the household. She was quite a different person from Joan. Whereas the latter was very organized and placid in outlook, Betty was disorganized and emotional, up one minute and down the next. She was very lively and attractive and had many boyfriends. She eventually married Graham Heap after a somewhat stormy courtship. At one point they were caught cuddling in a car by a policeman. It seems incredible to-day, but in those days it was an offence and was duly reported in the local rag. On another occasion they attended rather a wild party at which Graham's brother Geoffrey struck his head whilst coming down the stairs and never recovered consciousness. It was a terrible tragedy and once again fully covered in the press.

Whilst Betty was in charge of the household and just after she was married, Gordon and I gave Dad a pretty hard time particularly Gordon, who was more daring than myself. After a night on the tiles he would often climb up one of the drain pipes on to the roof and get into his bedroom by one of the windows, thus avoiding an encounter with Dad who was waiting up for him. Pub crawling was a favourite past-time and we had plenty of wild evenings after a rugger match with Manchester Rugby Football Club, which we both joined. Another favourite event was a visit to Bellevue near Manchester with Tom Dearlove, the local coalman and the local pulican to watch the dirt track or boxing and take part in the community singing and fireworks before departing. Gordon and I went to the local pub most evenings where we had some hilarious times, regularly being invited into the back parlour by the publican, his wife and friends. All this did not go down very well with the rest of the family, nor did our arrival at Trearddur Bay after midnight one summer holiday, very much the worse for wear after a pub crawl on the way down. After being sent down from Oxford Gordon found it difficult getting a job. He had an interview with John Holts but failed to make a good impression with some of our grim- faced uncles. However he was eventually taken on by a stockbroker's firm. I think in those days Dad had to put up or guarantee a certain capital sum before they would employ him. Finally Gordon surprised us all by getting married to Janet Eadie at the comparatively youthful age of 21. It was a wonderful wedding held in great style at the Towers in Wilmslow Park. A son was born to them in 1939.

I think it was at the age of about twenty or twenty one that I fell in love for the first time. I had a few girlfriends up till then but nothing serious and in any case preferred the company of men. Barbara Howroyd, however, really set me alight. She was a big blonde girl and had the gift of making you feel really important. I would make some puerile statement and she would look at me with those lovely blue eyes and say 'Doug you are marvellous.' She was very romantic and introduced me to books written by romantic authors such as Charles Morgan and to poetry which up until that time I had not bothered with. Unfortunately I took things too seriously and this was not what she wanted. We have, however throughout the years remained good friends. During the war I met her out in Alexandria in Egypt when she was an officer with the Wrens and she was able to arrange a meeting between Gordon and myself. Barbara also introduced me to the Wingrove family who had a house very close to theirs in Trearddur Bay. At that time Ursula or Urky as they called her was fourteen, her sister Binkie twelve, Pam the youngest eight and her brother Charles eighteen months or so older than herself. I was immediately attracted to Urky who was mature for her age and very affectionate and cuddly. We started writing letters to each other and whilst at Oxford I visited her at her school, Overstone, near Northampton, unbeknown of course to her parents. I had temporarily lost my driving licence and was driven to the school by the chauffeur Tom Dearlove, who must have been visiting Oxford his family home at the time. If I

remember rightly I hid under a rug and Urky had obtained permission to visit a fictitious uncle who was sending his car to collect her.

Around this time I had joined John Holts and was living in digs in Ullet Road, near Sefton Park in Liverpool where I had a bed/sitting room. I returned home each week-end playing rugger on a Saturday and golf every Sunday morning. I saw little of Dad who was apt to remark that I had used his house as a hotel. In 1939 Dad moved to Willaston, a village on the Wirral and into a house called Ruscote next door to Jack and Poppy. Lindfield in Fulshaw Park had become too big for him and in any case for sometime he had been getting into financial difficulties. He had retired at the age of 60 and although my mother had left him the income from her capital, which was in trust for us children, he had cut the income in half and covenanted half of this income to each one of his family. This was very generous but left him with insufficient funds to pay for his living costs and consequently got him into debt. In addition he contracted diabetes which made him very weak. However, he eventually went to work part-time with a cousin Francis Mather who had a textile weaving company near Bury. Francis Mather was a wealthy bachelor who in recognition of Dad's efforts to assist him, paid off his overdraft at the bank. Francis died in 1942 and having fallen out with his only sister and her large family left all his money to Jack and Gordon, about 70,000 pounds each, quite a tidy sum in those days. Apparently he had at some period asked Dad for the names of his two eldest sons but the youngest was not unfortunately mentioned! When the news was broken it made little impact in the middle of the war, at a time when the recipients of the gift did not know whether they would live to enjoy it. After the war my brothers each gave me 5,000 pounds, part of which I used to buy Ruscote which Ursula had moved into after our son Christopher was born in 1943.

Prior to joining John Holts I was sent to West Africa in the summer vacation of 1936 in one of the company's steamers, the S/S Godfrey B.Holt under the care of the Master Captain Harry Fuller. This was a great experience for me and fired my enthusiasm for joining the company. My grandfather had built up a large number of trading posts all down the west coast of Africa in what was then British and French and some ex German colonies. All kinds of merchandise was shipped out from the U.K. and Continent of Europe - cement, iron sheets, provisions and textiles and produce such as cocoa, palm kernels and palm oil was shipped home. Our small fleet of ships which had been built up over the years gave a fortnightly service to and from the U.K. and the Continent. The trading posts or ventures as we called them were managed by venture agents, expatriates recruited from the U.K. or in a few cases France. The ventures were divided up into districts under the control of a District Agent. It was a large and impressive business which in addition to the trading ventures owned a port in the Niger Delta and a fleet of boats to run up the river Niger to service ventures up country. It was the job of the Liverpool office to

buy merchandise to be shipped to the coast and sell the produce coming from the coast. The Liverpool office was also responsible for recruiting and administering the expatriate staff and there was a special department for running the ships. In 1938 the Board of Directors was entirely composed of members of the Holt family and apart from three senior Managers who had spent long periods in Africa, the managerial positions were also held by members of the family. There were thirteen of us when I joined in September 1938.

I was paid the princely sum of 50 pounds per annum and I was told that I was lucky to get that as I was no use to the company until I had completed my training. My uncle Robert Holt, the Chairman, was a strong disciplinarian and a very hard man who did not suffer fools gladly. As a result we nephews were scared stiff of him. It was made quite clear to me that if I did not follow the rules, I was out and indeed at least two members of the family had already suffered this fate. On the other hand if one made the grade, the prospects were pretty good with a seat on the board reserved only for a member of the family. My training consisted of spending a short period in every department, shipping, customs, cables, accounts, merchandise, produce and administration. Although my position was the lowest of the low, I was given a key to the Principals lavatory and addressed as 'Mr. Douglas.' The office hours were 9am-5.45pm on week days and to 1pm on Saturdays and we all had to 'clock in' on arrival in the morning. During the week I often went to stay with my uncle Jonathan or Jot as we called him. Although he was my grandfather's eldest son, he either did not want or was incapable of taking the responsibility of Chairman of the company. As I have already mentioned he had married my father's sister but she had been killed in a motor accident shortly before my mother's death. Uncle Jot had a very nice secluded house on a hill in Bidston near Birkenhead. A wood surrounded the house in which there were brown squirrels - a rare thing even then. Uncle Jot was a man of habit and many of his actions were closely timed. He got up at a certain time, had breakfast at a certain time and left the house at a certain time. God help you if you were late. He would walk to the end of the wood, unlock the gate, catch the same bus and same ferry across the Mersey and arrive at the office at the same time each morning, and this would be repeated again each evening. I used to stay with him at Broughton Grange which he inherited from his father and here things were slightly relaxed. He was lonely after the death of his wife, having no children and eventually he took in a housekeeper named Helen Bridger whom he married after the war. She was much younger than him, drank far too much but was clever enough to collect all his money and sadly the old family home Broughton Grange. She announced this with great glee after Uncle Jot's funeral in 1959. She died in a home for alcoholics some years later.

At the end of my training in Head Office I was scheduled to be posted to Nigeria, where I was to go as assistant to the Agent in charge of Zaria. This would have been a very nice posting as Zaria was in northern Nigeria where the climate was much better than the south and the agent was a man called Geddes, who was a pleasant man to work with. However my departure date was 5th September 1939 and by then the world had been turned upside down by the outbreak of the Second World War on 3rd September 1939. The storm clouds had been gathering for some time as Germany's Hitler disclosed his intentions to rebuild Germany's lost empire by marching into and annexing neighbouring territories. Although Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister had bought time by the famous 'Peace in our Time' meeting with Hitler, we in Britain had started to make preparations to build up our defence resources. Gordon had already joined the Territorials - the 7th Cheshires, an infantry regiment with headquarters at Macclesfield, near Wilmslow. I used to attend their ' Hot Pots', a supper after drill which was a pretty wild affair as much beer was consumed. When I suggested to Dad that I too would like to join the Territorials he understandably was not very keen. So in due course I joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve on H.M.S. Eaglet, a depot training ship in Liverpool docks. At that time I did not have to go through the ranks but joined as a fully fledged Sub-Lieutenant. The Captain of H.M.S. Eaglet, himself in the R.N.V.R. was in a firm which supplied stores to our ships and as uncle Robert was in charge of our fleet, he facilitated my entry without any difficulty arising.

By August 1939 the situation in Europe had reached a crisis point and war was inevitable. Pretty well all our staff in the office of eligible age had joined up in the reserves and one by one we received a call to arms and the office gradually became denuded. I myself received instructions to proceed to Portsmouth and on the 3rd September Chamberlain announced that we were at war with Germany. I remember I was in uncle Jot's house in Bidston playing billiards when we received the news on the radio. It took some time to realise the full significance. I was posted to an aircraft carrier H.M.S. Argus in Portsmouth docks and stationed on watch at a gun turret watching for bombs that never came. I was twenty two years of age and up to that time had lived a pretty privileged and sheltered way of life. Leaving Liverpool in uniform one was treated somewhat as a hero at the railway station, but I soon came down to earth with a bang. Life onboard H.M.S. Argus at that time differed very little from peace time routine. We had a marine band on board who in addition acted as Officer's servants, a number of Engineer Officers with a Captain (E) in charge, Supply Officers, Doctors, a Commander and a four ring Captain in command. Also a number of Deck Officers and Midshipmen and a full complement of Chief Petty Officers, Petty Officers and ratings. Before we sailed from Portsmouth we were also joined by Officers and ratings of the Fleet Air Arm together with a number of swordfish aircraft.

Part 11

The War Years

After HMS Argus had been commissioned and the ship had been overhauled and improvements made, we underwent trials at Spithead and in November 1939 with a ship crew of 500 sailed to Toulon in the South of France with attendant destroyers, calling for one night at Gibraltar. Based at Hyeres as a Deck Landing Training Carrier we used the south coast of France as operational waters and Toulon as food, water oil etc. supplier. We trained approximately 200 pilots and although the job was interesting to start with, it eventually lapsed into a monotonous routine. We had many peculiar types of crashes as it was not easy to land on the deck of a carrier but only one death and this was on our first exercise. I was eventually persuaded to go up in a swordfish aircraft and remember looking down from the cockpit at the tiny landing deck of the aircraft carrier below us wondering if we would ever make it.

We found Toulon a very reasonable place to go ashore and made many friends there, amongst them Douglas and Mara Stuart who came aboard for a Christmas party. I visited their home outside Toulon on numerous occasions and after the war I went back again with Ursula and the family and we became lifelong friends.

At the end of April 1940 we sailed to Malta and underwent repairs etc. The main harbour Valetta was very much of a naval base at that time and everything was laid on for us. I hired a car and toured round the island and we had a very enjoyable time. However, the Italians had declared war by then and we were in constant fear of being caught at anchor and bombed. I remember that one of my duties whilst in Malta was to patrol the coast in a small motor boat keeping a look out for submarines and floating mines.

In June 1940 we returned to Hyeres and set up a Fleet Air Arm shore base and on completion left for Gibraltar and the U.K. We were left for 36 hours without an escort and spotted a submarine which surfaced and then submerged, but did not attack us. We later joined up with a fast convoy comprising HMS Hood (battleship,) destroyers and the Queen Mary, Maurentania, Empress of Britain etc., which were used as troop ships and painted grey. We sailed down the Clyde and thence to Glasgow. Later in the month we sailed to Iceland and set up another Fleet Arm base, this time with Walrus sea planes at Reykavick. The Icelanders gave us a pretty hostile reception and were as cold as their climate. It was only when the Americans finally arrived that they realised we were not so bad! I remember very well the wonderful fishing we had there and also the hot springs coming out of the ground and the very short nights at that time of the year. We left with a large

number of German civilians on board. They were scared stiff at the thought of being torpedoed by their own U-boats and were afraid to go below the upper deck.

In July we embarked 12 Hurricane aircraft which were required for the relief of Malta. From Gibraltar we were escorted by HMS Ark Royal, Hood, Valiant, Resolution and the cruisers Arethusa and Enterprise plus destroyers. We were attacked by about 30 Italian Savoias aircraft and the Argus was well straddled, but no ship was hit. The hurricanes flew off from Argus within range of Malta escorted by our own fleet air arm Skusas and the operation was completely successful. I, myself, travelled home on HMS Arethusa in charge of a boarding party in the event of enemy merchant ships being captured. Fortunately this never transpired although we did have a false alarm!

At the end of August we took 30 Hurricanes to Takoradi in what was then the Gold Coast. On arrival I was able to look up the John Holt agent, whom I had met on my trip to the coast before the war. On the way home we were held up in Freetown for a fortnight at the time of the attack on the French fleet at Dakar. Strangely enough I was able to meet up with my Oxford friend John Stokes who was attached to General de Gaulle. On the way home we had a peculiar incident when a U-boat surfaced between Argus and the armed merchant vessel Silicia who was escorting us. The Silicia opened fire and the ricochets were coming over the top of the flight deck. The U-boat also fired at us but fortunately no hits were scored by anybody and the U-boat eventually submerged.

In November we did a repeat operation to Malta with another 12 Hurricanes escorted by Fleet Arm Skuas. This time something went wrong with the navigation and out of the first batch to take off from our flight deck only the skua and four aircraft landed, and the whole of the second batch ditched into the sea through lack of fuel and none of the pilots survived. It was particularly sad as these young pilots were Battle of Britain survivors who had done such a wonderful job for us all.

In late December 1940 we sailed to Gibraltar with a large convoy of about 35 ships escorted by cruisers HMS Berwick, Bonaventure and Dunedin, in addition to destroyers and corvettes. On the 21st December a submarine was sighted on the surface, two cables off our starboard bow in darkness and was attacked by one of the destroyers. German Foke Wolf aircraft sent out from Bordeaux were also seen to be shadowing our convoy in order to report our position to U- boats. On Christmas Day December 25th at 07.40 hours I awoke to the tune of action stations and from the flight deck saw a large number of shots and guns firing on the starboard side where the large convoy was situated. The enemy, which was first identified as Admiral Scheer and afterwards as an 8" cruiser, appeared to pass down the line firing broadsides and the convoy returning fire. Finally the raider

turned west with Berwick, Bonaventure and Dunedin in hot pursuit. At 11.30 hours Argus flew off two swordfish bombed up with tin fish but the operation was abandoned due to very bad weather conditions. Berwick in the meantime had lost sight of the raider and the cruisers were ordered by the Admiralty to rejoin the convoy and ourselves to steer hot foot for Gibraltar, a submarine concentration having been reported to the east of our course.

It was learnt later that two hits had been obtained on the raider and that the Berwick had sustained slight damage and one merchant ship, *Empire* Trooper had been damaged also. HMS Berwick suffered five casualties. It also transpired that HMS Bonaventure whilst looking for the dispersed convoy found the raider's supply ship. However, before she could capture the vessel they scuttled themselves and were afterwards taken prisoner.

I stayed on the Argus until March 1941. We had returned to the Clyde and continued Deck Landing training with some new types of planes, otherwise things were similar to Toulon although there were a lot more crashes. On March 6th I was discharged to HMS Excellent for a gunnery course. I was not sorry to leave as I did not really enjoy life on a big ship as there was too much regimentation. However, I had a lot of training and learnt much about the Navy. At Portsmouth, Whale Island I took part in the 7th RNVR Control Officers Gunnery course. It was a stiff course but fortunately I passed the exam on completion and this helped me to get a posting to HMS Black Swan as Gunnery Officer. I had my first experience of night bombing at Whale Island and we had two bad blitz nights with our bedroom windows being smashed in.

I joined HMS Black Swan in Dundee where she was undergoing repairs after the Norwegian campaign. Black Swan, a sloop was built similar to a destroyer but with long range fuel tanks installed for convoy protection. She had a complement of 8 Officers and crew including a doctor who later became best man at my wedding. After a working up period at Scapa Flow where I had an opportunity to put into practice my gunnery training at Portsmouth, we were sent to Belfast for convoy duties in the Irish Sea. This was an unusual assignment for we were not protecting the convoys against U-boats, but against attacks by German aircraft which were penetrating this area at that time. We escorted convoys to the Bristol Channel ports passing within a few miles of Holyhead each time and turning round at Milford Haven, south Wales.

At around midnight on July 9th 1941 we were attacked in moonlight by a Junkers 88 and a Heinkel 115. The attack was driven off and no damage took place. I remember very well my nervous excitement was immediately relieved by giving the order to fire even though we missed by miles. On August 24th however, we were

subjected to a low level bombing attack by a Heinkel 111. Six bombs were dropped from 30 feet. We were straddled by three bombs which exploded and pierced three holes in the starboard quarter and two unexploded bombs, one 500lbs and one lOOOlbs were found stuck in the tiller flat - i.e. at the after end of the ship. We were also machined gunned and subjected to cannon fire. At the time of the attack most of the officers were in the wardroom at the rear of the ship and we were therefore, extremely fortunate that those two bombs did not explode. As it was we were towed to Pembroke dock for repairs which lasted some 16 days, the bombs having been defused en route.

We stayed on the Irish sea run until the end of September when we moved on to Londonderry. Whilst alongside at Belfast I met up with my brother Gordon, who had been sent there for regrouping after the evacuation of Dunkirk. Janet had also moved over to Northern Ireland with their son Peter and I had a short stay with them all in Portrush. From Londonderry we commenced escorting convoys in the Atlantic to Freetown and Bathurst, and then in November 1941 our captain became Senior Officer of 37th Escort group based in Liverpool at Gladstone Dock, sailing to and from Gibraltar.

I remained with Black Swan and the 37th Escort group until June 1943 and the whole of this time was spent on escorting convoys. It was, of course somewhat monotonous but there was always that element of danger from a sudden and often unexpected attack by U-boats. Naturally, we did obtain advise from the Admiralty regarding the number of U-boats thought to be converging on our convoys and a shadowing Foke Wolf would signal that the convoy had been spotted. The majority of our escorted merchant ships were pretty slow and although we all carried out a continual zig zag plan, we were very vulnerable to attack. I should mention that an interesting feature of these convoys was that John Holts ships on their way to West Africa almost invariably carried the Commodore of convoys, and as we were senior officer of the escort group, we had continuous contact with the Commodore, sometimes going alongside to speak to him on the loud hailer. On one occasion, our Captain hailed the Captain of the S/S Thomas Holt and I was able to speak to my old friend Captain Harry Fuller, and on other occasions I was able to send messages to the John Holt captains. This held me in good stead when after the war I eventually became responsible for the operation of the John Holt ships.

I was of course fortunate in returning to Liverpool on these convoys and we had some good times at Gibraltar on the outward leg. Geoffrey Haigh, a very old friend from Wilmslow area was stationed at Gib with the army, also Gerald Ray, a friend from Uppingham and Oxford. We had visits on the ship from ENSA parties and during the war I met quite a few celebrities including John Gielgud, Elizabeth Welch, Michael Wilding and Douglas Byng who came on board to have drinks with

us. One irritating feature of these convoys was the necessity to sail round the north of Ireland, rather than through the much quicker route of the Irish sea. Eire remained neutral throughout the war and there was no black-out in force, so that their towns and villages were lit up at night. Moreover, U-boats sheltered off the south coast of Ireland and we suspect were able to fuel there. This made a journey through the Irish sea far too dangerous.

HMS Black Swan was a very happy ship and I made some very good friends amongst my fellow officers. I introduced many of them to the Wingrove family, who inspite of severe rationing always gave us a great welcome and a good meal, often supplemented by raids on our ships galley.

Amongst others I took up to St. Ives, the home of the Wingrove family in West Derby, Liverpool, was a Dr Ben Houston whom we had picked up together with 61 survivors from the Empire Star in mid-Atlantic in October 1942. He became quite keen on Binkie Wingrove and so was quite a regular visitor whilst in Liverpool.

From the outset of the war, Ursula and I had kept up a regular correspondence and whenever there had been an opportunity I had telephoned and spent the better part of my leaves with her. The three girls were at school at the beginning of the war and when they were at home they spent most of their time at Trearddur Bay, where the family rented a house for the duration and beyond. Charles Wingrove joined the Amy as soon as he could inspite of being in a reserved occupation, as he was at that time training to be a farmer. He was almost immediately posted to the Middle East where he was captured in one of Rommel's advances and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner in Germany.

Ursula joined the Wrens in September 1941 and was stationed at Holyhead in the signals section and in 1942 we became engaged on one of my leaves. The Black Swan sailed up to Rosyth at the end of May 1942 for an extensive re-fit so were able to make arrangements for our wedding on June 6th. Most of the Officers came to the wedding including Captain Pakenham. It was a glorious day in every respect and the reception was held in the garden in exceptionally warm and sunny weather. We spent our honeymoon on the farm at Broughton Grange in Lincolnshire and afterwards Ursula came with me to Edinburgh where we stayed whilst the ship was in dry dock.

In April 1943 I returned to Liverpool after convoy duties to hear the news that my father had died. He was only 65 years old but had not been fit since developing diabetes at the age of around 60. Apparently he had suffered from a septic throat and pneumonia had set in. There was no curative drug such as penicillin at that time and sadly he passed away at the home of my sister Betty and was buried with

my mother at St. Bartholomew's church in Wilmslow. Dad was a very kind and gentle man and extremely generous to his family. Unfortunately, due to his diabetes he was not very active during the last years of his life and as he was in any case 40 years older than me, we were not able to take part in many activities together. When he had gone I did of course regret very much that I had not spent more time with him but I shall always remember him with great affection. One of the most endearing qualities he possessed was a great sense of humour. Unhappily he never saw my first child Christopher, who was born in July 1943 at the Royal Hospital in Liverpool. Shortly after the birth Ursula and I moved into Dad's house, Ruscote in Willaston from St Ives, where we had been living with her parents since our marriage.

In June 1943 at the time of Christopher's impending arrival, I left HMS Black Swan having been recommended by my Captain for promotion to First Lieutenant of a similar type of ship. I was also recommended and later attained "Qualified Status" which acknowledged that I had reached in every respect the qualifications expected of a regular Naval Lieutenant, or in other words, I had made the grade! After a number of courses between June and August I was appointed First Lieutenant of another sloop of the Black Swan class, HMS Amethyst which was being built at Govan in Glasgow. The First Lieutenant was second in command of the ship and responsible for organisation and for fighting efficiency. When I joined, only the Engineering Officer, the Gunner and a few key ratings were present. I found digs in Hillhead and Ursula was able to stay with me before the ship was completed. By November the Captain, Officers and crew had joined the ship and after trials we were dispatched to Tobermory to undergo what was called a 'work up'. This took place under the direction of a very fiery and energetic Commodore who put us through our paces in no uncertain manner. His favourite trick was to board the ship in the middle of the night and catch everyone unawares. As a result, we were all scared stiff, particularly First Lieutenants who were his main target. I met Commodore Stephenson after the war and we had a good laugh about it but it certainly was not funny at the time.

My first Captain was a Lieutenant Commander S.C. Tuke D.S.O. We never really hit it off together principally because I found him very nervous and interfering. He was a Roman Catholic and as a result I had to conduct the Sunday services on board at which I became quite proficient. However, I had some very good Officers and Petty Officers including John Palmer, the Navigator who has remained another life long friend, and Roly Merz who eventually married Binkie Wingrove through my introduction. He did not stay long on the ship, however, as he applied for transfer when he found out that we were to be sent out to the Mediterranean, where he had just spent the last 3 years.

In January 1944 we sailed for Malta eventually being based at Alexandria and running from and to Gibraltar, via Sicily and Bizerta. We visited Haifa, Port Said, Cyprus, Algiers and north Africa ports amongst others. We were subjected to night bombing attacks by German planes based on south of France, and there were also a few U-boats about but we saw no conclusive evidence. We enjoyed views of the desert, Tobruk, Derna, Bardia, Cape Bon etc. and enjoyed our time in Alexandria. The yacht club was taken over as an Officers Mess and it was here as already mentioned that I met up with Barbara Howroyd. She arranged a meeting between myself and my brother Gordon, who at that time was stationed at Tel Aviv. He came on board with some of his fellow officers. We had more trouble with the Captain, but fortunately he was relieved by Lieutenant Bertie Pengelly, a splendid west countryman who had been promoted from the lower deck. Unfortunately he only stayed 5 months and was relieved by Lieutenant Commander Ninian Scott-Elliot. Ninian was a direct Entry Officer (he had not been to Dartmouth) from Eton. Although we all liked Scott-Elliot and he and I got on very well together, we had to tame him down a bit. He was very much a blood and thunder man and likely to attempt any kind of harebrain scheme if given half the chance. He had escaped as prisoner of war from Tobruk and somehow got into Spain over the Alps and thence to Gibraltar. I met him again only a few years ago when I stayed with John Palmer in Devon. He was just the same but according to John Palmer very lonely without any living relatives, as he never married.

At the end of September 1944 we sailed home and the ship was sent to Devonport to refit for the Far East and later up to the Clyde for training. However, at the last moment our sailing for Ceylon was cancelled and in January 1945 we proceeded to the Irish sea as part of a support group for convoys who were now able to sail up the Irish sea. U-boats were apparently doing a lot of damage off the southwest coast of Ireland; a corvette HMS Vervain right ahead of us was struck in the bows by a torpedo and she began to sink. We closed the torpedoed ship and within minutes gained anti-submarine contact and immediately attacked with percussion bombs, which were fired from a bomb thrower on the fore deck. Two explosions were heard followed by an enormous bubble and wreckage, bubbles and oil came to the surface. The U-boat was subjected to prolonged attacks by other vessels in the group by means of depth charges but the credit for the destruction was given to us. Three Officers and thirty ratings were picked up as survivors of HMS Vervain.

In June 1944 the Allies had landed in Germany, but it was not until 8th May 1945 that Germany finally surrended. On 9th May 1945 the German U-boat U249 was reported to have surfaced and was flying a black flag in accordance with instructions given by the Admiralty through the German C in C to all U-boats on the high seas. We were in the English Channel off Exmouth at the time and were ordered to rendezvous with the U-boat and escort her into Weymouth. In fact, we

escorted the first two U-boats that surrendered into Weymouth and placed an armed guard on the second one.

After V.E. (Victory in Europe) Day it was inevitable that HMS Amethyst would be sent to the Far East since the war against Japan was not yet over. I therefore, decided to ask the Admiralty if they could give me a shore job. The Officer responsible for Volunteer Reserve Officers at the Admiralty was very approachable and I had met him once or twice before. He was very sympathetic towards me as he knew only too well that I had spent the whole of the war at sea, but as he explained, there simply were not any shore jobs in Europe available. However, he sent me on an extended leave and said he would do what he could. I was sorry to leave HMS Amethyst but there had been many changes in the officer personnel and it was time for me to make a change also, and so on or about 15th June 1945 I said goodbye and went home on leave to Willaston. In fact I never did go back to the Navy as the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima at the beginning of August 1945 and my leave was extended indefinitely. I got bored hanging around and went back to John Holts for a while. I was released from service on 17th February 1946 shortly after my 29th birthday.

My service in the Navy was a great experience for me, and I was proud of the 'flimsys' (confidential reports) copies of which were given to me by my Commanding Officers when I or they left the ship we were serving on. They said some very nice things about me which led me to believe that my time in the Navy had not been wasted and my contribution to the war effort however small, had been appreciated.

My two brothers like me survived the war. My brother Jack was invalided out through ill health, but in any case he was at that time around forty. Gordon was injured at the Sicily landing with a nasty shrapnel wound on the neck at the base of the skull. The family feel sure that this wound had something to do with his loss of memory and early death in 1973. Two cousins were killed - George Holt, brother of Noel and David Holt, son of Stanley Holt. Other fatal casualities included childhood friends, Mark Rodier and Bobbie Keymer, Len Osgerby and Ian Brown, very close friends at Uppingham and Oxford respectively. My generation find it difficult to forget what happened during the last war and to overcome certain prejudices. Moreover, one must remember that our fathers, father-in-laws, uncles or other relatives had fought in the first world war. However, none of us can contemplate a nuclear war, which would mean the virtual extinction of those involved, and efforts now being made in Europe and elsewhere for closer co-operation and peaceful existence are to be greatly welcomed.

In my own family alone I now have grandchildren, great nephews and great nieces who are German, French and Spanish, and on the other side of the world, grandchildren who are Americans. This generation therefore, should have a very different outlook than mine.

Part 111

The Post War Years

With the war over at last Ursula and I were together at Ruscote, Willaston and now able to do all those things we had longed to do ever since we had been married. I think some of us tried to make up for lost time and there were some pretty wild parties in Benty Heath Lane where we lived. For some years my brother Jack and his family lived next door until they moved out to North Wales. He had purchased some land at the back of our adjoining gardens and this eventually became mine when he left the district. I used part of the field for a kitchen garden and in the remainder we kept ponies. We had a grass tennis court which we used regularly every summer and a nice little garden and orchard. We kept hens, had help in the house and a part time gardener. We had only one car at that time and I used to cycle to the station to catch the train to Liverpool. Benty Heath Lane was a very pleasant country area and still remains comparatively unspoilt. Unfortunately the soil was very thick clay and as a result after rain, water remained on the surface and it became very muddy. We had a lot of friends in Benty Heath Lane, in particular Margaret and Keith Greenwood and Randal and Pam Hughes, and all our children were brought up together. For a time we ran a kindergarten school ourselves employing a teacher and a classroom in one of Margaret's rooms. One of the highlights of the many parties that were arranged for the children was the bonfire and fireworks party held in our field on Guy Fawkes night followed by drinks in the house. For the grown- ups we were one of the few people who held tennis parties on the grass court and this was a very good way to entertain one's friends and gave us all so much enjoyment.

On my return home after the war it took me a long time to get to know Christopher, who not unnaturally resented the attention given to me by his mother and regarded my presence with suspicion. In April 1946 Vicki was born at Ruscote delivered by Nurse Hoggard, an excellent maternity nurse and friend of Poppy and her family. Dr. Garson, the family doctor arrived too late to be of much assistance but Ursula and Nurse Hoggard managed very well without him. Infact the birth went so well that Nurse Hoggard is reputed to have told Ursula to give a yell or two to keep me worried. Maybe as a result I got violent toothache and spent the night groaning on the sofa in the lounge.

With regard to the business I continued to work in what was known as Steamers Department. The war had changed everything and our ships no longer carried our own cargo exclusively and now formed part of a shipping Conference of three British companies led by Elder Dempster. Our ships became known as the John Holt Line and took a share of the trade outwards and homewards to and from the U.K and Europe to West Africa. Meanwhile we had replaced our ships destroyed

during the war. In 1947 I was sent out to Lagos to gain experience in working in a Shipping Agency. It was dreadful to leave Ursula after such a short time together and our parting was heartbreaking, as at that time wives were not allowed to go out to the Coast with their husbands on their first appointment. However she did join me after six months leaving Christopher and Vicki with their grandparents and coming out in one of our ships. I was posted to Warri where we had our own port facilities on the River Niger. The steamers sailed up the river to Warri and our river fleet then took cargo up the rivers right into Northern Nigeria. It was a very interesting place to work and on one occasion Ursula and I motored up north visiting river stations en route. Unfortunately Ursula contacted dengue fever (sand fly fever) on the way back and for a time was very ill and nursed by some nuns at the house of one of our agents on the river. Eventually we sailed home in one of our ships and were allocated the best cabin comprising a sitting room and sleeping cabin and bathroom. At that time our ships carried twelve passengers so constructed for the purpose of carrying our own expatriate personnel to and from West Africa, but in later ships when passengers travelled by air, only one or two cabins for passenger accommodation were built.

We had let our house in Benty Heath Lane whilst we were in West Africa and although we had left the grandparents with a nanny for Chris and Vicki whilst we were away, Granny had fallen out with her and she had been given the sack. A few months after our arrival home and still without a nanny, Ursula found herself pregnant. Penelope was born in Prenton in June 1948 after an unusually long and painful confinement. She was however, a lovely baby and unlike Vicki who had feeding problems at birth, gave us few sleepless nights. My old photograph album shows photos of the three Christening parties at Ruscote attended by various members of the family. The children were baptised at Willaston Church where they later attended Sunday School.

Soon after my return to the office in the Liver Building, infront of the river Mersey in Liverpool, I was taken out of shipping and sent to Merchandise and Produce departments in order to obtain an understanding of the trading side of our business which was of course the main reason for its existence. I visited many of the places from where we obtained our supplies for shipment to West Africa and learnt how cocoa, palm kernels, palm oil, goat skins etc. were produced on the Coast and sold in the U.K and Continent. It was inevitable that I should be sent to the Coast once more to gain actual experience of operating a trading branch, and so in the summer of 1949 I was posted to a large trading establishment at Kumasi in what was then the Gold Coast. After a short period of induction the manager went on leave and I took over. I had two European assistants in charge of the sale of different types of merchandise and one African who bought produce, mostly cocoa. I myself, as well as managing the business or venture as it was called, directly controlled the sale of textiles and the purchase of produce and was personally

responsible for cash and accounts. I also had to type my own confidential letters and reports. Kumasi is the capital of Ashanti, a very large region which had it's own King and the Ashantis were a big and very powerful tribe. We had a number of trading branches on the Gold Coast but Kumasi was really on a par for size with Accra, which was the country's capital and situated on the coast. We had an Area General Manager in Accra with a small HQ staff and I reported directly to him. This was an unique experience for me and I loved it. It was grass roots trading both selling wholesale and retail and going off into the bush to buy cocoa. I had a very nice bungalow with cook, houseboy and gardener and a car and chauffeur. I made many friends, worked very hard but sometimes managed to relax on the golf course where I won dubious fame by winning the "Boozers Competition" at which competitors took a drink at each tee before driving off. It was set over about ten holes, the boys carrying glasses and drinks in boxes on their heads for all those taking part. It was a wonder it didn't get into the local press and then we would have been in trouble. This was a sensitive time on the Gold Coast when the people with Nkrumah at their head were clamouring for independence from colonial rule. Whilst I was in Kumasi the British Governor Sir Charles Arden Clarke visited us and his car was stoned by the local population.

Before I left home for the Gold Coast, Ursula and I decided that she should not accompany me at first but would perhaps join me later on. Christopher had started school and in those days not all parents took their children out to the Coast. We were very much in love and our parting was extremely painful. For various reasons things were never to be quite the same again and with hindsight whatever the obstacles, I should have taken her and the children with me. Prior to my departure we obtained the services of a Swiss nanny who would live in. Most unfortunately, the appointment was a complete disaster and ended up with the girl attempting suicide by cutting her wrists. Although Ursula received a lot of help and sympathy from friends, it must have been most difficult to carry on alone under such circumstances. Her letters to me which I had always received so frequently began to tail *off*. I sensed something was wrong and became very apprehensive, so much so that I wrote to Head Office asking them to send me home at the end of my tour on the Gold Coast, for I was due to be sent to Nigeria after the Manager I had relieved at Kumasi returned on the expiration of his leave. I received a letter from my cousin John Holt advising me to think again, for as he pointed out I was in danger of jeopardising my future in the business if I abandoned my secondment to the Coast halfway through the course of training which had been arranged for me. I had no alternative therefore other than to ask him to tear up my letter and forget all about it. As soon as I was relieved at Kumasi I was sent to Kano in Northern Nigeria to take over as District General Manager. It would have been a superb appointment in a most interesting region but just before I was due to assume responsibility, I received an emergency cable recalling me home. Ursula had suffered a nervous breakdown and my presence was required immediately.

Once again I found my life turned upside down. Christopher was living with Jack and Poppy and going to the village school at Nannerch in North Wales with cousin Richard. Vicki and Penel were boarded out with a nanny in Hoylake and Ursula was in bed at the home of her friend Sonia Bibby at Bromborough. I was given a spell of leave and after a fortnight in Switzerland we returned to Ruscote to pick up the pieces. Various improvements were made to the house and we were fortunate in getting hold of a reliable nanny who stayed with us for a long time. In September 1951 Christopher went off to board at my old prep school, Stancliffe Hall in Derbyshire and with his happy disposition took everything in his stride. Things were more or less back to normal.

Early in 1952 I made another tour of West Africa, this time with our General Manager. We visited almost every branch belonging to the company in the French, British and ex German Colonies including a journey up the river in the Gaboon to inspect our timer forests. In all it took us three months and of course I benefited greatly from the experience. Before leaving it had been suggested that I might go out to America to live in Kentucky. The supplier of leaf tobacco which we shipped to West Africa had a factory in Louisville and his name was Bill Campbell. Bill and his wife Therese were old friends of the family as was Bill's father before him. Bill however had no family and no one to succeed him, so this is how my name cropped up. However, whilst I was on tour Bill wrote to Liverpool saying he thought the responsibility of bringing me to Kentucky would mean too much sacrifice on my part, weighed against my future prospects in John Holts, so he had decided to bring a young American into the business. When the suggestion was made I had rather welcomed it for a number of reasons, but in the event the Manager of our shipping company The John Holt Line resigned and I was offered the job.

The nineteen fifties were very good years for me and my family. After years of socialist restrictions and austerity a Conservative Government under Harold Macmillan gave us a much needed change. It was the era of "Never had it so good". I had an excellent well paid job which I loved and for a number of years the shipping company which became known as the Guinea Gulf Line prospered. We had built more ships, moved into new plush offices in the India Buildings in Liverpool and I became Managing Director and later Chairman and Managing Director of the company. 1 also joined the board of the parent company John Holt and Company. I travelled abroad extensively, regularly sailing to West Africa in one of the ships and returning with Ursula via Rome and Lisbon on two occasions. She also accompanied me to Bermuda in 1957 sailing out to New York in the Queen Elizabeth and returning in the Queen Mary. I joined a number of shipping organizations and charities, taking an active part in their executive functions.

In 1955 the family moved into a large house in Hinderton Road, Neston which we renamed Fairlawn. There was ample space in the house for everyone to have their own bedroom and the children also had their own sitting room. There was a big garden with grass tennis court, herbaceous border, kitchen garden etc., a tree house and outside play shed, dog kennel, oil central heating and water softener apparatus. We had ample help in the house and the garden and enjoyed an active and rewarding social life. In summer we took the family annually to Trearddur Bay where we would rent a house for the month of August and we also made several trips to the South of France to visit Douglas and Mara Stuart, and three visits to Switzerland in winter to ski. Once again we were able to enjoy tennis parties in summer on the grass tennis court and I exercised myself playing golf and shooting with my two brothers.

In 1956 Christopher left his prep school and went to Uppingham and the girls having spent a short time at Ambleside in the Lake District proceeded to Overstone School near Northampton, where Ursula and her sisters had previously been educated. Overstone was not far from Uppingham, so we were able combine visits and had a lot of fun staying at the George Hotel in Stamford, and at various picnics on Speech Days and in the surrounding countryside. As I am writing I recall the words of that song "Those were the days my friend" and looking back I too thought "They would never end."

In 1958 another major event occurred concerning our family but this time it was something to celebrate. Nicholas was born at the Maternity Hospital in Liverpool early in June 1958. Fortunately we were now better off than when the other three children were born and were therefore able to engage the services of a Norland nanny after the maternity nurse departed. Nurse Hoggard although by then quite old came to us once more as maternity nurse and Jill Bibby, who lived with us for some years, as Norland nanny. In 1961 we purchased a piece of land at Porth y Post, Trearddur Bay facing the sea and built a bungalow which we called Red Sails after the fourteen footers in the Trearddur Bay Sailing Club. After kindergarten in Parkgate, Cheshire Nicholas went to the Trearddur Prep School which was run by a lively headmaster called George Cartwright. Although George was getting on in years by the time Nicholas arrived at the school he was still able to instill some discipline and good manners into the boys. In addition to Red Sails I also bought a 'Pied a terre' in London, a small flat in Chelsea. At that time I had frequent meetings in London and became sick of living in hotels. Now I was a man of property!

The nineteen sixties brought a lot of changes in John Holts. There were many risks to be faced in trading in West Africa and the end of the colonial rule and subsequent self government created constant upheavals. Democratic government as practiced by the British did not work in Africa and led to wholesale corruption and bankruptcy. Various coups took place by the military creating further chaos and in Nigeria there was civil war. The authorities took over 51% of our business in Nigeria and eventually the majority of the managerial posts were Africanised. We endeavoured to diversify our business and for this purpose purchased vineyards and a wine shipper in Bordeaux and wholesale and wine and drink retail shops in the U.K. A separate division was created called John Holt Wines.

At this time John Holts was being run by the third generation of the family but the two leading characters my cousin John Holt, the Chairman, and my eldest brother Jack, the Vice Chairman, became involved in business and other activities outside John Holts to the detriment of the company. John became Vice Chairman of Cunard at a difficult time in the history of that company and was also a Director of Martins Bank, and my brother became Chairman of Cammel Laird, the shipbuilders in Birkenhead, a Director of Guardian Insurance and also a Justice of the Peace and High Sheriff of Flintshire. Inevitably the pressure on these two men became too great. My brother suffered two serious thrombosis attacks and although he recovered, he died whilst on holiday in September 1961 at the age of 57. John Holt who had lost his son in a motor accident never really got over the tragedy and after a series of minor strokes died at the age of 61 in 1966.

Shortly before John Holt died a new Managing Director had been engaged, a man named Tom Prentice who had been in Lewis's but became unsettled by the Charles Clore take over. Philip Hunter, a Liverpool solicitor and married into the Holt family, became Vice Chairman. In a big shake up of the business overheads were drastically cut and three Directors including my cousins Cecil and Noel Holt were retired early. Cecil was the younger brother of John and a family feud developed which was never resolved. Cecil infact died at the early age of 56. I myself did not remain unscathed. Due principally to the introduction of African National Shipping companies into the West African Shipping trade, our share of the freight fell drastically, and since we were a small company, we did not make sufficient profits to cover ship replacement costs. In 1965 we sold the Guinea Gulf Line and our ships to Elder Dempster, the principal shipping company in the West African trade. I was still responsible for the river fleet and shipping agencies, but they were virtually operated on the Coast and did not really require much supervision from Liverpool. There was therefore no future for me in a full time position and arrangements were made for me to leave the company on the 1st April 1965.

As one can imagine, I was deeply shocked by these events for I had never contemplated for one moment, that I would one day get the sack from my grandfather's business. I remember how helpful it was for me to go down to the bungalow at Trearddur Bay at the week-end, to try and work things out in a rational manner. I was nearly 50 years old and the future looked pretty bleak, for I had never really considered doing anything else. In the event my resignation never took place and instead I was offered and accepted a new appointment in the Group. During the shake up which I have referred to, business consultants were engaged and they recommended a completely new organisation for the company. This organisation provided for a central group Personnel Department and a qualified and experienced Manager was recruited. However, despite his professional competence he did not go down very well with the staff, particularly in West Africa where text book methods rarely worked. The Board therefore decided that overall supervision should be exercised by me and with effect from the 1st December 1964 I was appointed Personnel Director.

At this time the company was no longer one hundred per cent privately owned, for our shares had been floated on the Stock Market, but fortunately the family still retained control. Suddenly out of the blue a young whiz kid as they were called, tried to take us over. Unknown to us, this man Oliver Jessel had been purchasing shares principally through my nephew Roderic Mather's stockbroking firm, until he owned about a quarter of the company and then he suddenly pounced, announcing his intentions in a very arrogant manner. Fortunately, we were able to rally the family shareholders and as a result we saw him off but it gave us a big fright. Oliver Jessel and another man called Jim Slater built up big empires by means of asset stripping. What they did was to buy up old family businesses similar to John Holts, whose assets were considerably undervalued in their balance sheets and then immediately sell off some of these assets at inflated prices. In no time at all they had recovered the purchase price and made a thundering good profit in addition. Inevitably these two gentlemen became too big for their boots and outstretched themselves and as a result became bankrupt.

Because of the attempted takeover by Jessel, Philip Hunter who had been appointed Chairman of the company on the death of John Holt, took the view that we should sell the company to someone we could live with, rather than be subjected to a bid similar to Jessel. He therefore approached Inchcape, a trading concern similar to ourselves but whose roots were in the Far East. Inchcape eventually put up a price on our shares but the Board considered this too low and the offer lapsed. One of the younger family executives in the company Michael Holt and myself thought we should now abandon further attempts to sell the company, but Philip Hunter and the Board, half of whose members at that time were non executives and not involved in the business thought otherwise. Eventually a sale was arranged in

1969 to Lonrho, a company whose origins were mining in Rhodesia to which various African trading activities had been added by a very lively entrepreneur named Tiny Rowland. Shortly after the sale of the company Michael Holt resigned as did most of the Directors and new blood was introduced in the shape of our own top management and I found myself the only member of the family left on the Board, and infact with the exception of one comparatively junior manager, the only member left in the entire company. No wonder I felt very vulnerable.

Meanwhile at home the family had grown up fast. If Christopher had not excelled academically at school any more than his father, he had certainly done well in other directions, notably rugger. After leaving Uppingham he went to McGill University in Montreal, Canada for a year and then spent a short time travelling around America and a few weeks in Bermuda. Vicki stayed at school until she was seventeen but Penel left after taking her 'O' Levels. Vicki went to a finishing school in Switzerland and Penel to Paris after completing a Secretarial course with Miss Fawkes in Liverpool. After prep school at Trearddur Bay Nicholas also went to Uppingham where the school had adapted to modern times and eventually introduced girls into the sixth form at the age of sixteen. The sixties was the age of the Beatles and Rolling Stones. The children had lots of parties, marquees on the lawn to celebrate twenty first birthday parties and all had cars including a jeep. Besides plenty of domestic help we were lucky to have Kathleen to come and cook our evening meal every night.

To everybody's surprise Christopher became engaged to Jane at the very early age of 21 and 20 respectively and they were married in the church at Uppingham in July 1964. At this time Chris was working in Owen Owen, a large retail business in Liverpool. Vicki after a spell in London living in my flat got a job in Canada where she met her future husband Rolf. Penel after working in our wine group for a year or so went to London to live in the flat and had a good job in the Canadian Embassy and later on with a solicitor's office. As a result of all this Fairlawn was becoming too big for the family, now reduced to three. Moreover it was difficult and expensive to get sufficient help in the garden to cut the lawns and the large expanse of hedges in addition to all the digging that was necessary. The price of oil rocketed and the cost of heating the house became a burden. Ursula wanted me to convert the house into separate apartments but I was reluctant to risk capital in such an enterprise. Instead she found a house in Chester with a garden leading down to the River Dee but unfortunately I was unable to obtain a mortgage on the property as the insurance company turned me down on medical evidence, which showed I had something wrong with my kidneys. Instead we decided to build on to Red Sails and buy a small flat in Chester by the river. In May 1969 Vicki and Rolf were married at Willaston Church and a reception was held in a marquee on the lawn at Fairlawn. It was a very lavish affair and in the evening when the bride and

bridegroom had departed a dance was held to celebrate Penel's 21st birthday which carried on until the early hours. It was the end of an era. Shortly afterwards we left Fairlawn and Red Sails became our official home although the flat at Meadow View, Chester was used during the week for easy access to the Liverpool office. Week-ends and holidays were spent at Trearddur Bay. It seemed an ideal arrangement for the few years remaining before my impending retirement.

In the early nineteen seventies there was a revival in the company's fortunes in Nigeria. For many years oil had been discovered offshore in the eastern region of Nigeria and an oil refinery had been built at one of the ports. With the sudden rise in the price of oil Nigerian had plenty of hard currency and although our business was now Nigerianised, Head Office in Liverpool made big profits through commissions earned in sterling, prior to the export of an increasing shipment of merchandise to the Coast. In addition, the Wine Group was beginning to make a useful contribution to overall profits. The business was very well managed and Lonrho had plenty of their own troubles to contend with without bothering us. To all intents and purposes therefore we were left alone without any outside interference although our Managing Director resided in London and was a member of the Lonrho Board. I enjoyed my job as Personnel Director and perhaps was in a unique position as a member of the family able to cushion the effects of the change in ownership on our staff. In other words there was a continuity which might otherwise have not existed. I think also that the Managing Director Tom Prentice was able to confide in me on some matters which he was unable to share with the other Directors. I was not of course qualified professionally for the job, but the Manager Fred Radford who worked with me certainly was.

Tom Prentice was a hard task master and not everyone was willing to accept his methods. In consequence there were a number of casualities amongst top management. As time went on I found it more and more difficult to keep up with all the changes and although the pressures under which we operated probably did me a lot of good and exercised my brain I was glad when the time came for me to leave. Under our pension scheme I was one of those allowed to retire at the age of 60 having spent some time in West Africa. I was asked to stay on for a few months until the close of our financial year so at the end of September 1977 I finally departed. I had made a final tour of Nigeria and Ghana to say goodbye and was given a number of farewell parties within the group with accompanying tributes and presentations. My service with John Holts including absence due to the war amounted to 39 years and one month but not quite as long as my father who had served 40 years with the Fine Cotton Spinners and had been given a certificate to prove it. I was presented with a gold watch with my service inscribed on it.

We used the flat in Chester for approximately 8 years. During that time Ursula became interested in antiques and took some space with a lady selling pine furniture in Chester. Gradually she began to specialise in paintings, studying the subject at great length and progressively spending more time in London, where she felt she was better able to make her purchases. Penel married Brendan in Trearddur Bay in 1971 and after leaving Uppingham Nicholas studied Accountancy living in or around the Liverpool area. Grandad Wingrove died in 1976 and because Ursula wished to operate her picture business in London, we sold the Chester flat to Granny since she was no longer able to continue to manage her house and large garden at Hinderton, near Neston.

Just prior to my retirement I had a final check up with the company doctor. Unfortunately an x-ray showed something wrong with my kidneys. I was taken to a specialist who diagnosed a growth and things looked bad. However a final internal investigation disclosed that one kidney was very much larger than the other and there was no cause for alarm. In addition I had arthritis in the right hip but had managed to keep going with the help of Turkish baths and massage, so that I could have the operation when I retired. And so apart from these temporary set backs I looked forward to my immediate future and drove down to Anglesey to begin my retirement and a new life.

Part 1V

Retirement

Unlike most men of my generation I welcomed retirement and did not find it too difficult to adjust. However it is necessary to work very hard at it and it is no use waiting for things to happen. You have to make it happen yourself. For some years I planned a number of annual events which I looked forward to with great pleasure. These included a visit to California in April and May, a week in Provence at the end of August and somewhere warm in February. There were other events such as Cheltenham Races in March and the Ebor Handicap at York in August. Advanced age has curtailed a lot of these activities but it was great fun while it lasted. Fortunately I have been able to keep fit inspite of arthritic hips, playing golf and shooting. For many years I acted as gamekeeper at our local family rough shoot as well as joining various shooting syndicates. This enabled me to learn so much about Anglesey and its people particularly the farming community.

Regrettably my two brothers and two sisters are dead as are my two brother in-laws and one sister in-law, but I keep in touch with their children and grandchildren. At Red Sails, Trearddur Bay I spend a lot of time looking after myself but fortunately do not find cooking an obstacle. I have quite a number of friends and enjoy a good social life including a weekly bridge party during the winter and membership of a retired businessmens club. I suppose there are a few people who like to live alone and enjoy their own company. I certainly don't but sometimes this is part of one's destiny. To indulge in self-pity brings no reward and it is better to count one's blessings. Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone. Apart from five operations, four of which were caused by arthritis in the hips and ankle, I have enjoyed good health. Fortunately I have learnt some sense regarding my eating and drinking habits and have long since quit smoking. However old people sometimes become unduly apprehensive regarding their health and it helps now and again to get a little reassurance from somebody.

I like living in Trearddur Bay. It is of course somewhat remote and subject to south westerly gales but there are many compensations particularly if you are willing to enter into the life of the community. Ursula persuaded me to buy the property at Porth y Post and build a bungalow with a lovely view. I have been coming to Trearddur Bay since I was a small boy and it has provided a continuity in my life unlike any other place. No doubt some of my family share similar feelings about the island and Red Sails in particular. Over the years the enlarged bungalow has provided us with a family home. The visitors book tells the story of the family, the births, the growing-up pains, the marriages and deaths as well as scores of celebrations and other functions held at Red Sails. My family are very caring and I

am forever grateful for their love and consideration towards me. They are of course the most important thing in my life and Ursula and I have shared their joys and sorrows together. I am now over 80 and have been retired over 20 years. I do not know what the future holds but despite some disappointments, I have had more than my fair share of happiness and I hope perhaps I have been able to pass on a little of this to others.

"Keep right on to the end of the Road
Keep right on round the Bend".

(From a song sung by Harry Lauder - a famous Pre-War WW1 Scotsman)

Sacramento, California.
March/April 1998