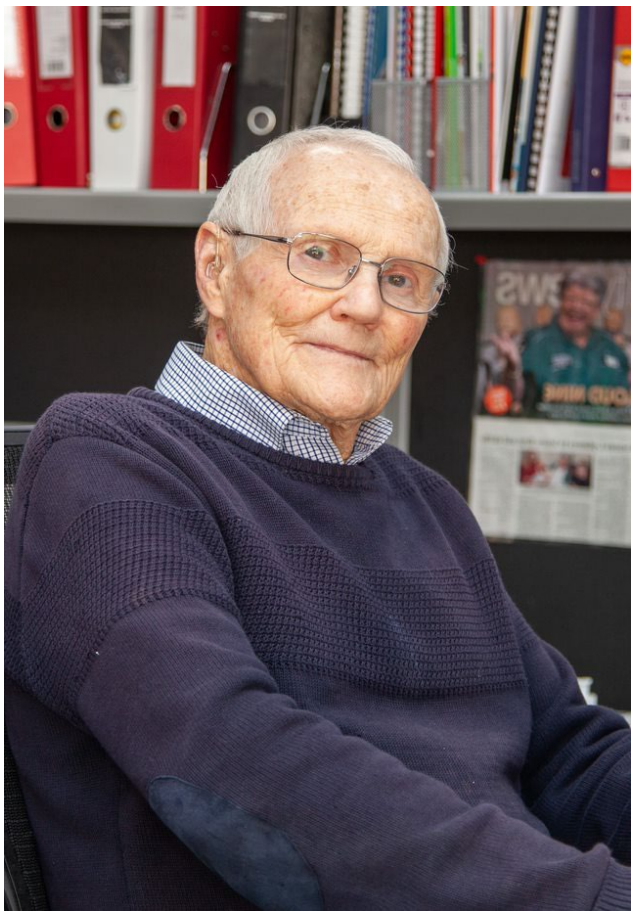

ONE HISTORIAN'S LIFE

Pursuing History for 86 Years

An Australian historian looks back over his long life. He ponders why and how that is what he became. As he contemplates the history he has lived through, he reflects on what historians do.

Ian Howie-Willis

One Historian's Life

Pursuing History for 86 Years

Ian Howie-Willis

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Ian Howie-Willis at his desk in the Australian Office of St John Ambulance Australia, Deakin, Canberra, ACT, March 2023. (Photograph by Charlene Bartak.)

Rear Cover image:
Ian Howie-Willis at his desk in his study at home, Wanniassa, Canberra, ACT, September 2023. (Photograph by Adrian Boddy.)

PREFACE

This book started out less ambitiously than it became. My original intention was to jot down a set of notes on who my children's and grandchildren's ancestors were. The need to make meaningful explanation of who the ancestors were, however, has ensured that what follows eventually became a book rather than notes.

Along the way, my manuscript became a set of chapters describing my education, training and employment history. Together, the chapters describe how an early interest in history eventually became a lifelong passion and a career. Of necessity, they discuss my forays into higher education, journalism, teaching and book publishing as well.

Looking back over my chapters, I realise that what I have written is something of a social history of my life and times in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the UK, the countries I have lived in.

There is much I have not written about because to have included everything I can remember would have resulted in a multi-volume work, which, quite honestly, my rather ordinary life does not merit.

In containing the book within one volume, I trust that I have given my readers something they might enjoy reading. If they learn from it, well and good, but pedagogy has not been my intention in producing it.

I have consciously chosen my title and sub-title. 'One Historian's Life' makes the point that although historians share a profession, they each approach it from their own standpoint. No two historians tackling the same subject will write the same history. Similarly, 'Pursuing History for 86 Years' makes clear that I have *always* been fascinated by history and was destined to be an historian.

I will now leave my readers to judge how successfully that one historian practised his craft, and whether or not he will leave the world a better place through having done so.

Ian Howie-Willis
Wanniassa, Canberra
June 2024

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1. EARLIEST MEMORIES

My life probably began in Daylesford, an old goldmining town in central Victoria, in late March 1937. My parents, Jim and Mavis Willis, lived there before moving to North Brighton midyear. Brighton is one of Melbourne's southern bayside suburbs. They would live there for the rest of their long lives; and that was where they raised their five children.

I'm not quite sure where my parents lived during their time in Daylesford. Perhaps it was Hodge Street, the uphill side, about 250 metres north of the town centre. Mum took me to a house near there when I was nine, during a family holiday in the town, to introduce me to the Hart family, who had been their next-door neighbours.

My parents lived in Daylesford because Dad was a forest officer employed by the Victorian Forestry Commission. In the three years since their marriage, he had lived the semi-nomadic life of the commission's professional foresters, who were regularly rotated from one district to another. Dad's previous postings had been Creswick, Mum's hometown, 27 kilometres south-west of Daylesford on the road to Ballarat; and then, after they had married, Bealiba west of Bendigo, another goldfields town, and Cockatoo, east of Melbourne on the far side of the Dandenong Ranges. The shift to Melbourne was necessary because Dad, an aspiring botanist, was posted to the National Herbarium of Victoria within the Royal Botanic Gardens, near the south bank of the Yarra River.

They settled in Brighton rather than some other suburb because Mum's aunt, Hetty (Harriet) Stanford (1862–1947, née Harris), loaned them the money to buy a recently built house there — at 63 Durrant Street, on the eastern corner with Edgar Street. From memory, it cost £3,000, about $292,000 in present-day values, but, Brighton having meanwhile gentrified, the house is now worth about $2.3 million. Aunt Hetty had lived in Brighton herself before she was widowed; and she thought it was a 'desirable' suburb for a young couple like Mum and Dad. Before its gentrification, which began during the 1960s, it was largely lower middle class, with a few downmarket working-class streets. Then, as now, the streets near the beach boasted the larger homes of the affluent.

The Durrant Street house remained the Willis family home until I was 15, when we moved to a larger house 400 metres away, around the corner at 102 Male Street. I lived in the Male Street house for the next nine years, until early 1962, when I left home to take up my first teaching position at Warrambeen, out on the windy Western Plains between Geelong and Skipton.

Having spent my first 23 years in Brighton, I can claim to be 'a Brighton boy', even though I wasn't born there. My birthplace was the Bethlehem Private Hospital in Kooyong Road, South Caulfield, 400 metres north of North Road, the Brighton-Caulfield boundary. I entered the world there at 4.00 p.m. on Thursday 30 December 1937.

By contrast, Margaret (née Vale), my wife of 62 years, who grew up at 11 Edgar Street, only 200 metres from the Willises' Durrant Street house, is 'Brighton born and bred'. That's because she was born in the Padua Private Hospital, Warleigh Grove, a block north of the Bay Street shopping centre in North Brighton. My three younger siblings, David, Helen and Dorothy, are also Brighton-born, because they were all delivered in the Brighton Community Hospital, on the corner of New and Normanby Streets in Middle Brighton. Ruth, our older sister, was born while our parents were in Cockatoo.

My earliest memories are of life in the Durrant Street house. It was a small two-bedroom, triple-fronted, weatherboard-clad 'Californian bungalow', a building style still popular in the late 1930s. At the back it had a small open-sided sunroom, which served as a third bedroom — Mum's and Dad's. 'Small' is the operative term when considering 63

Durrant Street. All the rooms were small — main bedroom, second bedroom, sunroom, dining room-sitting room, kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and hallway. With each additional child, who arrived at three-year intervals, it became ever smaller as we grew to fill the available space. We were rowdy, rumbunctious children, so when one of us was having a temper tantrum, it must have seemed even smaller for our despairing parents.

But what are the earliest memories? There is a series, all but one of them mine. The exception was an incident when I was only several months old. Mum told me about it often enough for it to be considered a 'recovered' memory. It seems that big sister Ruth, 32 months older than I, resented my intrusion into a family circle in which she had previously been the sole centre of attention. One Saturday afternoon Dad was mowing the back lawn, and perhaps the long, wide nature-strip down our Edgar Street side fence as well. He used a heavy old-style hand-pushed 'Qualcast' mower. Mowing our lawns was a solid half-day's work. As the grass-catcher filled, he emptied the clippings on to the compost heap. I was outside in my pram taking the air; and Ruth was playing around as Dad mowed. When Mum came out to check on us, she found that Ruth had completely buried me beneath a thick layer of grass clippings. Out of sight, out of mind? Making baby brother disappear to restore the happy, secure ante-natal family?

My own earliest memory is of my teddy bear, probably a Christmas or birthday present, when I was about two. Teddy, which was all he was ever called, was my constant companion as a small boy. He was tucked in beside me at night; and to lull myself asleep I used to pluck little tufts of his golden fur, with which I'd tickle my nose. Teddy soon lost all his fur. He was loved so much he had to be periodically repaired — arms and legs stitched back on, new buttons sewed on for eyes, holes in his fabric darned. Some 84 years later I still have him, largely because Mum saved him after I'd outgrown him at about age 8. He now sits forlornly on the dresser in a spare bedroom — Katie's old room — in our home here in Wanniassa. Mum's rough repairs, which kept his stuffing from falling out, can still be seen beneath the 'girly' doll's clothes with which my youngest sister, Dorothy, clad him after she'd claimed him. He still wears the remnants of the suede leather pilot's helmet that Mum made for him after I'd decided I wanted him to be in the air force. Sometimes when he catches my eye I say to him, "I reckon you're going to outlast me, sport, because you've withstood time's ravages better than I have!"

Mum believed that my habit of tickling my nose with Teddy's fur contributed to the asthma I suffered throughout my childhood and early teens. The asthma became chronic when I was about three, during a holiday we spent at my Uncle Charlie Howie's house at Red Cliffs, a frontier town amidst the red Mallee sand hills near the Murray River in far north-western Victoria. Uncle Charlie, Mum's oldest brother, 20 years her senior, and married to Aunty Letty (née Bowley, a Creswick girl), ran the local plumbing business from a workshop adjoining the house. While there, I fell ill with bronchial pneumonia. In that pre-antibiotic era, pneumonia was a dangerous, life-threatening disease, especially for the very young and very old. I was in bed desperately ill for two weeks or more. I remember lying there periodically racked by coughing fits. I guess that Mum and Dad had to extend their stay with Charlie and Letty until I was well enough for us to return to Brighton. It must have been a fraught time for everyone because the Howie house was only small.

An allergy from over-indulging in Teddy's fur or a pneumococcal germ inhaled from the dusty Red Cliffs atmosphere? Whatever the cause, asthma, often exercise-induced, became a regular and unwelcome companion throughout my childhood. Any cold I ever caught inevitably brought on an attack, and I'd then have to spend a week or two in bed wheezing and coughing before recovering sufficiently to return to school. Eventually, late teens, I more or less grew out of it. I suffered from it less after I began playing hockey and

running several miles several times a week; however, I wasn't fully freed from it until the advent of the 'Ventolin' puffer, which I used for the first time in 1981.

Another early memory is of my first cousin, Graham Howie (1938–2018), three weeks younger than me and the son of Mum's fourth brother, the Rev. Reg Howie, the Methodist minister at Yallourn in the Latrobe Valley east of Melbourne. Uncle Reg, Aunty Flo (née Morgan), and their sons Jim and Graham used to stay with us in Brighton when Reg came up to town for the annual Methodist conference. Graham and I, who might have been 2½ at the time, had identical cane baby 'feeder' chairs with fold-down trays at the front. We'd be sat next to each other in the kitchen with our bowls of breakfast cereal in front of us and spoons in our hands. Graham, an indulged, loud and demanding child who was bigger than me, saw this as an opportunity to beat me over the head with his spoon. I was a timid little chap so didn't hit back, but I probably wailed until my chair was moved out of reach of Graham's.

Other early incidents I recall involved my Grandpa Howie, Charles Pringle Howie (1859–1941), Mum's father, a retired plumber, lived with us intermittently in Brighton during the last year of his life. By that stage he was 81 and nearly blind with cataracts; and I was three. Ruth and I used to clamber into his bed some mornings so he could tell us stories. On one such occasion, Ruth was taking up more than her share of the space in Grandpa's narrow bed, so I was squeezed out and fell on to the cold linoleum floor. Sobbing, I went off to complain to Mum, with Grandpa calling after me, "Come back! There's plenty of room." The next memory is of Grandpa standing in only his trousers and singlet in the bathroom, shaving with his cutthroat razor while looking into the mirror above the washbasin. I came to watch this spectacle. Always a curious child with many questions, I asked, "How come you're looking in the mirror, Grandpa, when you're blind and can't see your face there?"

Another strong memory from those years is of the best Christmas present I ever received — a kid's 'Steelcraft' pedal car. It was only second-hand, maybe third- or fourth-hand, probably of about 1920s vintage. Cumbersome, not very manoeuvrable, and very heavy, it was, seemingly built of bullet-proof sheet steel. I nevertheless loved it. I insisted on taking it outside right away to pedal it up and down the Edgar Street footpath. I wasn't interested in any of my other presents that day because I had eyes for only my red-painted pedal car with pale green trim. All my younger siblings used it after I outgrew it, and probably some of their children did too on their visits to see their grandparents.

My first haircut was also memorable. The 'barber' was Mum's favourite brother, my Uncle Bill Howie (1891–1984), who was visiting with his wife, our Aunty Val. I had long, curly blonde hair, almost down to my shoulders, because Mum admired it so much she wouldn't have it cut. No doubt thinking it effeminate, and unbecoming for a male of the Howie lineage, Uncle Bill sat me on Mum's dressing table and got to work with the kitchen scissors. I didn't mind, and was fascinated by how my face in the mirror changed as my tresses fell around me. Only the adored Bill could have taken such liberties with his little sister's precious only son! About four years later he got away with it again, when he shore my brother David's snowy shoulder-length curls as well.

Mention of David reminds me of another early memory — his arrival home from the Brighton Community Hospital in October 1941. I was led to the bassinet where this scrawny, wrinkled little red-faced creature was lying asleep swaddled in his white knitted coming-home clothes. "This is your little brother David," Dad announced lovingly. I was wholly underwhelmed. If that was what a baby brother was, I wasn't overjoyed to have one.

A couple months after this, by which time I was almost four, the Pacific War erupted. Japanese planes were soon bombing Darwin and other northern Australian towns. Everywhere we went, on all the buses, trains and trams, were people in military uniforms, mostly Australians but many Americans as well — soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines. Not Dad, however, because he was a lifelong pacifist and a conscientious objector. To do his bit

for the war effort, he became a stretcher-bearer with the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) organisation. He never got to practise his first aid skills during an air raid, because Melbourne was about a thousand kilometres from the nearest military action. I felt very proud of Dad when he rode off on his bicycle to his weekly ARP drill sessions, wearing his 'tin hat' helmet with his gas-mask in its khaki canvas haversack over his shoulder. He wasn't a soldier like other boys' fathers were, but he still looked 'military' in his tin hat.

I well remember Melbourne's one direct experience of the war. It occurred early on the morning of 26 February 1942, shortly after 7.00, when a Japanese reconnaissance plane from a submarine lurking off King Island in Bass Strait made a circuit of Port Phillip Bay at a height of only 300 metres. It flew over Brighton on its way back to rendezvous with the submarine. We were used to planes flying overhead because the Melbourne-Launceston flight path lay directly over our house. As the Jap plane passed overhead, I could easily tell it wasn't the usual Australian National Airways Douglas DC3 on its daily run to Launceston. I could plainly see the red roundels on its wings. "What sort of aeroplane is that?" I asked Mum. "That's a Japanese plane," she calmly replied without betraying the concern she must have felt.

Australian and American war planes often flew across Brighton from the Laverton and Point Cook military aerodromes on the other side the bay. Sometimes they flew so low they seemed little more than rooftop height. On one occasion the pilot swooping down over our backyard came so close I made eye contact with him, even though he was wearing a leather flying helmet and goggles. I guess he was enjoying himself, putting on a show to enliven the civilians in suburbia. When I recall this incident, I wonder what he made of the little boy staring back at him as he made his deep dive over the house on the corner of Durrant and Edgar Streets.

After the Pacific War began with the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941, the possibility of a Japanese invasion provoked near-panic in Australia. The Japanese began occupying Australian New Guinea in January 1942. They started bombing Darwin and other northern Australian towns the next month. Mum and Dad decided that we'd be safer from air raids if we lived away from Melbourne. We accordingly moved to the former Howie home at 64 Albert Street, Creswick, which Mum had inherited after Grandpa's death in June 1941. The house was a shopfront. It comprised two large rooms facing the street, which had been Grandpa's plumber's store and workshop, and an attached residence at the rear.

The residence had been rented out to a genial elderly widow, Mary ('Ma') Smart, who became a good friend of our family. We occupied the former store and workshop. Life there was rough: no kitchen or bathroom, and we used the pan toilet at the rear of the residence. Dad installed a bath in one corner of the workshop; and Mum cooked over the open fire and on a small kerosene 'Primus' stove. For our weekly bath, water was boiled in kettles on the fire, then emptied into the bath. We all used the same bathwater — first Ruth and me, then Mum, and finally Dad, perhaps after another kettle of hot water had been added. They furnished the place sparsely — second-hand kitchen table and chairs, kitchen cupboard and beds. The workshop became the kitchen-living-room-bathroom; the store became the bedroom. The windows in both rooms were frosted over so passers-by couldn't peer in; and some of the shutters were kept in place to provide additional privacy.

Having made our two Creswick rooms minimally habitable, Dad returned to Brighton so he could resume work at the Herbarium. He'd come up to Creswick by train for the weekend every couple of months. We lived in Creswick for ten months, eventually returning to Brighton before the end of 1942. By that time the tide of the war in New Guinea was turning against the Japanese, and fears of an invasion were receding.

Our months in Creswick provide a fund of early memories. We celebrated David's first birthday there; and I recall the single red candle atop his birthday cake. By that stage he was highly mobile. He never learned to crawl, but used to 'bottom-shuffle' — propelling himself forward by sitting on his bottom then bouncing himself in the direction he wished to go. Let loose in Ma Smart's part of the house, he could get from one end of the central passageway to the other in several seconds.

Ma Smart allowed Mum to do our laundry in the washhouse at the rear end of the house, where there was a copper for boiling the clothes and two wooden troughs for rinsing and blueing them. After the washing was done, the water was left in the troughs to prevent the wood from drying out and splitting. This was the cause of a near-drowning experience for me. While Mum was outside hanging out the washing on the clothesline, I clambered up the troughs to inspect the water, then slipped and fell in headfirst. I remember coughing and spluttering under the soapy water, wondering how I was going to get out again. Just then Mem returned, hauled me out, and whacked me on the back so I'd cough up the water I'd inhaled. I can't remember what she said, but I don't think she scolded me for doing what I shouldn't have done. I guess she was hugely relieved that she'd rescued me from a mishap that so swiftly and easily could have turned to tragedy.

Our chief playmates in Creswick were the twins Phoebe and Norman Anstey, who were about 18 months older than me. They were Ma Smart's grandchildren from Sunshine, an industrial outer-suburb of Melbourne. Like us, they were escapees from the air raids that never happened and were living with Ma for as long as the supposed emergency lasted. A special treat for us was to be invited to morning tea by Ma. We'd sit in her cosy kitchen drinking tea, nibbling biscuits, and gossiping about family, friends, town life and Creswick's notable citizens. This group included Lady Peacock, the widow of Sir Alexander Peacock, a local man and thrice the Premier of Victoria. Lady Peacock occasionally visited us to watch David having his morning bath in his washtub. Other well-known citizens were Mary and Isobel Lindsay, the unmarried sisters of the famous family of artists — Percy, Lionel, Norman, Ruby and Daryl Lindsay — who lived next to the Methodist Church, which we attended. Ruth and I also went to Sunday School there. It had been the Harris and Howie family church for almost 90 years, and Mum and Dad had married there in 1933.

During our ten months in Creswick we had one holiday, at Majorca, a small settlement 42 kilometres north-west of Creswick outside Maryborough, one of the main regional centres in Central Victoria. Majorca was where our 'Uncle' Cecil Hunt, the husband of Mum's first cousin, Lilian ('Aunty Lil', née Harris), ran the local one-teacher school. I can't remember how we got there, but I suppose we caught the train from Creswick to Maryborough, where Cecil would have collected us and driven us back to the teacher's residence adjacent to the school. Cecil was an immigrant from Ireland who received his teacher training in Victoria then taught in various bush schools. Lil was the only daughter of her family, her father, the Rev. Richard Harris ('Uncle Dick'), being the youngest brother of Mum's mother, Annie Howie (née Harris, 1867–1935). Mum was the only surviving daughter of her family; she and Lil were much the same age; they were always good friends, and consequently more like sisters than cousins.

The three Hunt children, our second cousins Jennifer, Trevor and Bruce, were of similar age to us. (The fourth child, Prudence, hadn't been born yet; nor had my younger sisters, Helen and Dorothy.) Bruce, who was about a month younger than me, could already read and write even though he hadn't formally started school. That was because he spent much time in his father's schoolroom. He was in and out of it all the time, meeting with the kids there, joining them for art and craft sessions and story-time. He absorbed literacy as if by osmosis. Mum made me feel like a real dummy by suggesting that I ought to be reading and writing

too. ("Hey, Mum," I reflect in retrospect, "I didn't inhabit a schoolroom like Bruce did, so if you'd wanted me reading and writing before I started school, you should have taught me!")

Looking back on my first four or five years, I'm surprised at how little I do remember. I've always had a good memory, a useful attribute for an historian like me. Margaret sometimes remarks that I have a 'filing cabinet' mind, and that I don't forget things but store them away for future reference. That might be true, but it doesn't apply to my earliest years, from which I mainly recall the incidents I've just described.

Perhaps one reason for remembering so little is that there was little to remember. If so, that was because we led circumscribed, insular lives. We knew but had little to do with our neighbours, except for those next-door — the Weedons in Durrant Street and the Deans in Edgar Street. Barry Weedon, two years younger than me and an only child, was my main playmate until I acquired friends of my own age at school. Beverly Dean, a year older than me and 18 months younger than Ruth, was one of Ruth's friends. Beverly's younger sister, Sylvia, same age as our David, was David's playmate when they were little kids digging in the sandpit together.

Our social and cultural life centred on the Methodist Church in Male Street, 500 metres from our Durrant Street house. It was a busy place, with activity of some kind going on there most days and nights of the week. We attended the Sunday School there at 10.00 a.m. then joined our parents for the 11.00 a.m. service, and often returned for the evening service at 7.00 p.m. The church calendar included the annual Sunday School concerts, anniversaries and picnics; films about mission activity among the Aborigines in Arnhem Land and the Melanesians in Papua New Guinea; the annual men's tea meeting; community hymn-singing ('Methodism was born in song — and steeped in tea', as one Minister quipped); junior and senior choir practice; boys' gymnasium and girls' calisthenics; Saturday afternoon tennis on the court beside the Sunday School hall; magic-lantern-illustrated talks by visiting lecturers; Bible study sessions; and the oratorios sung by the choir — Handel's *Messiah* at Christmas and Stainer's *Crucifixion* at Easter, with Dad often the bass soloist. Then there were the various women's groups — the Ladies' Guild, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Women's Auxiliary of Overseas Missions and the Women's Home Mission League, all doing their bit to win the world for Methodism.

Apart from church activities, entertainment consisted of listening to the radio — news bulletins, concerts, lectures, drama serials, comedy, pop songs and classical music. Very occasionally, we took the train into Melbourne to see films in one of the numerous cinemas there. *'Fantasia'*, Walt Disney's 1940 animated musical anthology, featuring Micky Mouse and other cartoon characters, is the first I can remember.

Dad's botanical colleagues occasionally came to dinner; church people dropped by for a cup of tea and a yarn; and relatives sometimes came to stay. The rellies included Mum's four surviving older brothers — Uncles Charl', Norm, Bill and Reg Howie and their wives (Aunts Letty, Glad, Val and Flo), most of whose offspring — ten Howie first cousins — were much older than us. Others were the Hunts, the family I mentioned earlier. They sometimes stayed with us on their excursions to Melbourne during the school holidays.

Less frequently we visited and were visited by Dad's sole sibling, Dr Rupert Willis, who, 11 years Dad's senior, was an eminent cancer pathologist. He and his wife, Margaret, and two children, Betty and Trevor, emigrated to England at the end of World War II; and after that we saw even less of them. They returned to Australia several times; and we visited them during periodic excursions to Britain; but I probably only met them on a dozen occasions. Decades later, after I'd established myself as an historian, I had the great privilege and pleasure, as well as the filial duty, of writing both Dad's and Uncle Ru's entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Our most frequent staying guests were Dad's mother, 'Grandma Willis' (Mary ['Polly'] Elizabeth Giles, née James, 1872–1959) and her younger unmarried sister, 'Aunty James' (Mabel Amelia Claremont ['Clarey'] James, 1886–1967). They lived in retirement at Ferny Creek in the Dandenong Ranges but came down to Melbourne for annual visits to stay with us for three weeks at a time. They also came to take charge of the household during Mum's successive confinements. We Willis kids didn't enjoy these extended sojourns, because 'Grandma and Aunty' (as we called them) were always censorious of our behaviour, giving us the impression that their main purpose in visiting us was to implement and superintend a strict disciplinary regime among us.

Sometimes there were return visits, when Ruth and I would spend a week with Grandma and Aunty at their cottage at 73 Hilton Road, Ferny Creek. The house perched at the top end of a one-acre hillside block carved from the surrounding forest of mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and treeferns. Carefully tended lawns and gardens surrounded the house, but the lower half of the block remained virgin rainforest, with a small, permanent creek forming the lower boundary. Getting there was an adventure: escorted by Dad, we first caught the train into Melbourne then changed trains for Ferntree Gully, the terminus at the foot of the Dandenong Range. For the 10-kilometre final stage to Ferny Creek we took an ancient, wheezing bus up the Mount Dandenong Road. The scariest part of the trip was the notorious 'Devil's Elbow', scene of many accidents, a bend where the road doubled back on itself as it climbed the mountain.

'Regnans', Grandma and Aunty's house (the name bestowed by our forester-botanist father), was an oddity. It was built around a hollow square of three decommissioned Melbourne tramcars from the old cable-car network. A fourth tramcar became the garden shed down the back yard. Our grandfather, Benjamin ('Ben') James Willis (1873–1933), a retired bank manager, bought the tramcars, had them transported from Melbourne by low-loader truck to the block, and then engaged a builder to cobble them together as a house. The effort killed Grandpa Ben Willis. He dropped dead from a heart attack in the house as it was being completed. That was four years before my birth, so he was one of the two grandparents I never met. (The other was Annie Howie, Mum's mother, who died in 1935 only three months after Ruth's birth.) One of Ben's tramcars became the kitchen-dining room; the other two became bedrooms. Ninety years later, the house is still standing. I've just checked it in Google Maps; and except for being densely overhung by shrubbery and tall trees now, it's just as I remember it from the very early 1940s.

Being recycled tramcars, the 'Regnans' bedrooms were long and narrow. They were 'colour-coded' as the 'green room' and the 'gold room', each painted and furnished in its 'theme' colour. The 'gold room' was for guests, so that's where Ruth and I slept. Grandma and Aunty were kinder and less forbidding during these trips; and so I used to enjoy my time at 'Regnans'. I loved exploring the bush and the creek at the bottom end of the block, where I'd occasionally see lyrebirds. A favourite game was to pretend I was the tram driver or conductor in the garden shed, which was still mounted on its two four-wheel bogies. Grandma was a superlative cook, so I greatly appreciated her cuisine; but one meal I hated was Monday morning breakfast. This consisted of a bowl of diced bread in hot milk sprinkled with sugar. Unappetising mush, it was one way they economised, using up the crusts of bread left over from the previous week.

In later life, my Willis cousins, Betty and Trevor, who became my good friends, used to chuckle with me over Grandma's attempts to discipline us. They told me that she regimented them as well. She cited us, her Brighton grandchildren, as models of what well-behaved children should be like. When she was with us in Brighton, however, Betty and Trevor were the exemplars of good behaviour. By proffering the children of one of her sons as role models for the children of the other, she'd been morally blackmailing us all. I'd be mortified to think

that in the decades ahead my own grandchildren might catch me out for having played manipulative emotional games like that!

Grandma dutifully kissed us goodnight before we went off to bed. I didn't enjoy this ritual because she had a prickly chin. Did she shave the hairs that grew there, producing her stubble? I probably offended her on one occasion when I was very young because as she bestowed a kiss I said, "Grandma, I don't like you kissing me because your whiskers scratch my face."

I don't have many fond memories of my Grandma Willis, but I'm grateful to her for one bequest — my awakening interest in history. During her visits the family usually sat around the kitchen table chatting over cups of tea after dinner had been cleared away and the washing-up done. Grandma would then tell us the stories of her childhood in the Congregational manse at Lake Rowan in north-eastern Victoria. This was 'Kelly Country', the region roved by Australia's legendary bush ranger, Ned Kelly, and his gang. Many families in the district had tales to tell of encounters with the Kelly Gang. According to one of Grandma's stories, one evening the gang turned up to a 'social' in the church hall at Lake Rowan. Even though they were Catholics, progeny of Irish immigrants, and this was a Protestant gathering, they caused no trouble and eventually departed into the night. Stories like that thrilled me for they transported me back in time to 'the good old days' and allowed me to imagine what it must have been like encountering the Kelly Gang. To keep Grandma talking, and telling more of her stories, I'd ask many questions. Eventually she'd tire of my inquisitiveness. "Curiosity killed the cat!" she'd pronounce, rising from the table. This was the signal that the evening's story-telling had ended, and it was now bedtime for us children.

The 'olden days' were of endless fascination for me, so I loved listening to Grandma reminiscing about her girlhood 70 years earlier. The bygone times enchanted me. I felt a yearning for the past of long ago, a nostalgia for eras long before I was born. Grandma's stories of her childhood satisfied that longing, but also aroused my curiosity, compelling me to learn more. Some 80 years later, I can recognise the awakening of a historical consciousness and the first stirrings of a historical imagination. I now wish I could thank Grandma for having helped me discover my true vocation.

Nearby in Brighton we had all the facilities and services we required. We rarely travelled into Melbourne on shopping trips. There was little need for going so far. The local shops on the corner of Durrant and Hampton Streets, 100 metres to our east, included a pharmacy, two groceries, a butcher's shop, a dairy, a GP's practice, and a green-grocery which doubled as a news-agency and milk-bar. The main North Brighton shopping centre, 700 metres to the north in Bay Street, included banks, the post office, real estate agencies, a bookshop-lending library, dentistries, medical practices, pharmacies, furniture shops, delicatessens, bakeries, hairdressers, milk-bars, draperies, frock shops, newsagents, green-groceries, groceries, shoe shops, a radio repairs shop, a hotel, a cinema, restaurants, and a button shop (where Margaret later worked part-time as a teenager).

Sister Ruth, now the matriarch of our expanding clan, who read the first draft of this chapter, tells me she now regrets having been my potential murderer 86 years ago. She also recalls two other memorable local commercial enterprises. The first was the Brighton Ice Works, diagonally opposite our Durrant Street house. Back in that pre-refrigerator era, most homes had an ice-chest — block of ice in the insulated top compartment, perishable foods in the bottom. An ice-man would deliver a new block of ice from his insulated truck to each house every week. We didn't have such deliveries, however, because we were so close that Dad would walk across the road to collect our block of ice personally. Ruth reminds me how we'd escort him as he bought the block, wrapped it in a hessian bag, then carried it home on his shoulders. We liked watching the water gushing into the bins for the next batch of ice, and seeing the frozen blocks tipped out from the bins later. A strong smell of ammonia pervaded

the ice works because liquid ammonia was the refrigerant pumped through the cooling coils during the freezing process. After we got back home and the block of ice was in the ice-chest, we were allowed to chip off shards of ice to cool our soft-drinks.

Ruth's second recollection is of Lu Kooey, the Chinese greengrocer who regularly brought us fresh fruit and vegetables in his horse-drawn van. He was one of a small community of elderly Chinese men who maintained market gardens in semi-rural East Brighton. They'd hawk their produce from door to door around Brighton. We loved his visits because if he had punnets of cherries to sell, he'd pick out double-stalk cherries, which he'd hang over our ears as 'ear-rings'. Another hawker who visited us periodically was Mr Rose, a genteel elderly Jewish haberdasher. He was perhaps a refugee from Nazism because he spoke with an accent. He carried a small suitcase in which he kept his wares, mainly for sewing, for example needles, cotton thread, buttons, elastic and various fabrics. Mum would invite him in and serve him a cup of tea as he displayed his goods. She'd buy several items, and then, tea finished, he'd move on to his next customer.

The primary school we all attended, Brighton State School on the corner of Wilson and Male Streets, was only 500 metres away. Willis children were continually enrolled there from 1939, when Ruth began in the kindergarten class ('the bubs'), until 1959, when Dorothy finished Grade 6. Margaret began her long teaching career there as a pupil-teacher — an 'apprentice' — in 1958. Her class, the Grade 5 Girls, included Dorothy. Much girlish giggling when her classmates discovered that 'Miss Vale's boyfriend is Dorothy Willis's big brother'.

In looking back over the foregoing paragraphs, two things strike me:

- First, we were enmeshed in a far-flung network of kinfolk. There were many more of them on Mum's side of the family, among the Howies and Harrises, because Mum was one of nine children, six of whom survived to adulthood and five of whom married and had children. On Dad's side there was only Uncle Ru. There were other Willis and James kinfolk too, but for various reasons Dad had only intermittent contact with them.
- Second, the Methodist Church was an all-encompassing reality. For us it was a world of its own within the wider world of everyday life. It shaped our understanding of, and relationship to, the world beyond the church. Like all other institutions, it must have been riven by personal rivalries, factional disputes and ideological conflicts; but it was also one dedicated to self-improvement and the betterment of the wider society. Many years later, a friend of mine who'd been raised a Catholic remarked that all the Methodists he knew were task- and achievement-oriented people. Whether or not he was right, Methodism served us well by conferring upon us a worthwhile mindset and system of values.

Brighton State School, the family network and Methodism are a good place to end this chapter. By the time I was five and starting school, in early 1943, there was much more to remember than from the five years before I became a schoolboy. I recall much, much more from my primary school years than I do from the years beforehand. I'll write about those years in a later chapter, but before I do that, I'll introduce my forebears and Margaret's.

2. FOREBEARS — CLANS WILLIS AND HOWIE

Margaret's ancestry and mine are mixed. Hers is mainly English and Highlands & Islands Scottish, with a dash — one-sixteenth — of Irish. Mine is half Cornish and a quarter each of English and Lowlands Scottish. (Cornwall of course is constitutionally English too, but the Cornish regard themselves as a separate people.) Put all that together, and we can say we're wholly British by descent, at least in recent centuries.

Untangling

Untangling our ancestry has been a continuing project of mine for the past 40 years and more, ever since I became interested in genealogy in the late 1970s. I took it up at the urging of my mother's second cousin, Enid Shann (née Wilson, 1913–1997). Enid and Mum were close friends, almost like sisters. Enid had been a teachers' college lecturer at Mercer House, the one-time training institution for private school teachers in Melbourne. She was also the Pringle family historian. Both Mum's and Enid's fathers were the sons of immigrant Scottish women, the Pringle sisters in Geelong. She said to me, "Ian, you're an historian by training, so you're the one person among your generation of the descendants of our Scottish forebears best qualified to preserve and pass on knowledge about them."

Encouraged by Enid, and by my parents and Margaret's, I started delving into family history, drawing up family trees for our various lineages On Mum's side, that meant the Scottish Howies and the Cornish Harrises, then, stepping back a generation to my great-grandparents, all immigrants to Australia, there were the Cornish Blights and the Scottish Pringles. On Dad's side, his mother's family were Cornish — the James and Giles families; on his father's side, they were English — clans Willis and Brown.

Margaret's forebears were similarly mixed, but the lineages were more complicated. Her father, William ('Bill') Henry Vale V (1912–1986), had one Irish great-grandmother, but the rest of his tribe were of English origin, from various counties. His mother's maiden name was Grenness, a Norwegian name, but that was an adopted name, a step-father's name taken over by her father. Margaret's mother, Flora ('Sandy') Jessie MacNab (1915–1988) was of mainly Scottish descent, MacNabs and McDonalds on her father's side, and McNeils and Camerons on her mothers. On the McNeil side she had an Arkell great-grandfather of Gloucestershire origin who had married a Scottish Cameron; and, as we've recently discovered, Arkell was originally a Netherlands name.

These days, genealogy is made easy by the websites of commercial enterprises specialising in it. Get your DNA tested by firms like Ancestry.com or Family Tree DNA, and they'll then help you construct a multi-lineage family tree which will soon take you back to your 16th century ancestors.

When I started tracing lineages and constructing family trees, genealogy was more difficult. It was a hard, slow, costly slog. It was rather like trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle in which many of the pieces were missing. You started with your own parents and grandparents, then went back generation by generation — great-grandparents, whose names you might know, then great-great-grandparents, whose names and life events, e.g. births, marriages, and deaths, you often didn't know much about.

The way to proceed was to purchase copies of the birth, marriage and death certificates from the relevant State Registries of Births, Deaths & Marriages. If the ancestors were immigrants to Australia, you also went to the immigration records to find ship passenger lists in which, hopefully, you'd find them recorded. You'd also cross-check between individual documents to ascertain and verify facts. Thus, putting together the data from such records would often help you work out an individual's approximate year and place of birth, whether

or not literate, age at marriage, occupation, parents and their names, children and theirs, date and cause of death, and place of burial.

All this took time, and, frustratingly, there could be dead-ends, gaps in the record and conflicting information. For instance, one of my starting points was a maternal great-grandfather William Howie (1824–1861), father of my Grandpa Howie. I knew little about him other than that, like many of his name, his forebears were from 'Lochgoin' farm, out in the desolate Fenwick moors in Eastern Ayrshire between Kilmarnock and Glasgow. From my informants, Mum and Enid Shann, I knew he had died young, maybe in 1886 (the date given on a photograph, but wrong as things turned out). I knew he left behind a young widow and three children in Geelong. Back in that pre-Internet era, you couldn't quickly consult an online database which would instantly yield the registration number of an ancestor's birth, marriage or death; instead you wrote to the relevant Registrar, who sent you a form to fill out and lodge, together with the set fee. In the early 1980s that was $18 in Victoria, the equivalent of $77 today. The fee allowed you to inquire across a five-year period. Guessing at the five-year period of William Howie's death, I received back a 'nil return', meaning he had died outside that time-span. I had to try five more times before I was sent his death certificate. Total cost of locating great-grandpa Howie, $108 or $462 in present-day values.

In obtaining all the registration certificates required for researching Margaret's and my various lineages, I probably spent several thousand dollars. Despite that, I don't begrudge the outlay because it was money well spent.

William Howie's death certificate was worth every cent I'd paid for it after the costly, frustrating months of effort in obtaining it. Receiving it in the mail was truly an epiphany. It was a veritable genealogical gold mine because it told me:

1) what he died from — 'English cholera', i.e. a dysentery-like infection with severe diarrhoea
2) where and when — in Market Street, Geelong, i.e. at home, on 27 August 1861
3) how long he had been ill — two days
4) where and when he was buried — Geelong Cemetery, on 28 August 1861
5) who registered his death — Elizabeth Storrer (née Pringle), his sister-in-law
6) what medical practitioner had attended him — Dr I. G. Carstairs
7) his age — wrongly given as 34 instead of 37
8) what his trade was — iron moulder
9) who his parents were — Mary née Wyllie and William Howie
10) where he had been born — wrongly stated as 'Argyleshire', Scotland, whereas it should have been Ayrshire and the town of Fenwick
11) how long he had been in Australia, from which the approximate year of arrival can be determined — 9 years, i.e. arrived in 1852
12) who his wife was, and his age at marriage — Margaret née Pringle; and at age 30 (it was actually 33), i.e. married 1857
13) the names and ages of his children — Mary Melrose Howie, age 3 years 8 months & Charles Pringle Howie, age 1 year 9 months. (Not included was a third and unborn child, William [no middle name], who was born in March 1862 seven months after his father's death).
14) Finally, when I compared the data in his death certificate with information from other sources, e.g. his marriage certificate, his second son's death certificate, and the passenger list of the *Lord Warriston* (the ship that carried him from Greenock in Scotland to Geelong), I realised that he'd been inconsistent in stating his age. Depending on the source document, he was born in 1824 (shipping list & 1841 UK

census), 1827 (death certificate) or 1828 (marriage certificate & older son's birth certificate). He seems to have understated his age to his Australian family by three or four years.

Lineages

All eight of my great-grandparents were British immigrants to Victoria. On Dad's side of the family there are four sets of ancestors, surnamed Willis, Brown, James and Giles. On Mum's side, the ancestral surnames are Howie, Pringle, Harris and Blight.

The following two tables show my ancestral lineages in the form of a family tree extending from my 16 great-great-grandparents and eight great-grandparents through my four grandparents and my parents to me and my siblings. This tree will be a useful reference point as you read the later sections of this chapter.

The first table indicates who my 16 great-great-grandparents and eight great-grandparents were. The second shows the four generations from the great-grandparents' to my own.

Sixteen great-great grandparents & eight great-grandparents

PATERNAL GREAT-GREAT GRANDPARENTS	PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDPARENTS
James Brand Willis (1809–1867), born Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire; migrated to Melbourne with his family 1852; died South Yarra Hannah Hagger (1815–1855), born Stapleford, Cambridgeshire; migrated to Melbourne with her husband and children 1852; died South Yarra	— James Willis (1846-1928)
William Brown (birth & death years unknown); lived and died in Birmingham Elizabeth Joyner (1815–1907), born Birmingham, Warwickshire; migrated to Melbourne with her children 1863	— Sarah Anne Brown (1845-1886)
Thomas James (1828–1874); born Kenwyn, Cornwall; died Blackwater, Cornwall Michel Kant/Kent (1827–death year uncertain); born St Agnes, Cornwall	— Thomas Henry James (1850-1907)
Richard Giles (1829–1869), born Kea, Cornwall; died White Pine County, Nevada, USA Elizabeth Pryor (1818–1893), born Kea, Cornwall; died Bendigo, Australia	— Emily Giles (1851-1918)
MATERNAL GREAT-GREAT GRANDPARENTS	**MATERNAL GREAT-GRANDPARENTS**
William Howie (1770–1844), born and died in Fenwick, Ayrshire, Scotland Mary Wyllie (1786–1864), born in Fenwick, Ayrshire, Scotland	— William Howie (1824-1861)

Charles Pringle (1789–1879), born Temple, Midlothian, Scotland; migrated to Geelong with his wife and most of their children 1849; died Geelong

Elizabeth Melrose(1792–1860); born Temple, Midlothian, Scotland; migrated to Geelong with her husband and most of their children 1849; died Geelong

— Margaret Pringle (1827-1905)

James Harris (1805–1872), born Truro, Cornwall

Mary Ann Nicholas (1811-1878); born Merther, Cornwall;, died London

— Joseph Arthur Harris (1830-1889)

Henry Blight (1786–1864), born and died in St Austell, Cornwall

Jane Penhall (1800–1882); born St Just in Roseland, Cornwall; died in Creswick, Victoria

— Mary Metcalf Blight (1828-1895)

And here are the four generations from the great-grandparents down to me and my siblings:

Four-generation family tree: from the eight immigrant great-grandparents to the five Willis siblings

Great-grandparents	Grandparents	Parents	Siblings
James Willis (1846-1928) — Sarah Anne Brown (1845-1886)	Benjamin James Willis (1873-1933)	James Hamlyn Willis (1910-1995)	Ruth Anne Willis (Mrs Churchyard, b. 1935)
Thomas Henry James (1850-1907) — Emily Giles (1851-1918)	Mary Elizabeth Giles James (1872-1959)		**Ian James Howie-Willis (b. 1937)**
William Howie (1824-1861) — Margaret Pringle (1827-1905)	Charles Pringle Howie (1859-1941)	Mavis Eileen Howie (1906-2002)	David Charles Willis (b. 1941)
Joseph Arthur Harris (1830-1889) — Mary Metcalf Blight (1828-1895)	Mary Anne Jane Harris (1867-1935)		Helen Mary Willis (Mrs Cossenas, formerly Ridder, b. 1944)
			Dorothy Mavis Willis (Mrs Charles, b. 1948)

I should explain why my surname is 'Howie-Willis' when my siblings and I were all born plain 'Willis'. I formally changed my surname by deed-poll in 1978 to incorporate Mum's maiden name into my own by hyphenating it with my birth name. I had various motives. First, I've always strongly identified with Scotland and fancied the idea of having a Scottish surname. Second, at the time no fewer than five Ian Willises were living in Canberra,

and that caused confusion, especially when one of them was on the school board where Margaret was the deputy principal. And third, I'd started publishing books of history and I wanted a more distinctive and memorable name than ordinary common-or-garden-variety Ian Willis to go on the dust-jackets and title-pages. (My publishers tell me that it was a 'good career move' because no one else is called Ian Howie-Willis, and so it's readily recognised.)

At the time a few people thought my self-awarded hyphenated name was a pretentious affectation; but I've had it for 44 years now, over half my life, so I've got used to it. Mum was delighted with the name change; and Dad thought it was a good way of honouring her.

Great-grandparents

My eight immigrant great-grandparents were:

1. James Willis

James Willis (1846-1928) was born in Great Shelford, a village four miles (6.4 kilometres) south of Cambridge. He was the seventh of 12 children of James Brand Willis (1809–1867) and his wife Hannah (née Haggar, 1815–1855), who took their family to Australia in October 1852 aboard the *South Seas*, a ship sailing from Liverpool.

Willises had been in Great Shelford and adjacent Stapleford for over a century, but the first of my ancestors with that surname were from Linton, a Cambridgeshire village 14 kilometres south-east of Great Shelford. There the surname had been 'Willowes' as far back as we can go, into the 1550s. The name was corrupted to plain 'Willis' about the 1670s, at least three generations before Thomas Willis of Stapleford (1722–1815, grandfather of James Brand Willis), the first of our clan known to have lived in the Stapleford-Great Shelford area.

The reasons James Brand and Hannah Willis had for emigrating possibly had to do with the land enclosure movement. Great Shelford was enclosed in 1852. James Brand Willis was allocated only one acre, the block on which his house stood, at No. 9 High Green. An acre was insufficient for sustaining a large family, so emigration to the land of promise, goldrush era Victoria, probably seemed like an attractive option.

They arrived in Melbourne in February 1853. The eleventh child, Thomas, a babe in arms, died during the voyage; and the twelfth, Lydia, was born the year after they reached Melbourne. The family settled in Prahran, now an inner suburb five kilometres from the Melbourne city centre but then a semi-rural settlement on its southern outskirts.

In Prahran James Brand Willis is thought to have worked as a cartage contractor, an enterprise in which his five surviving sons — Samuel, Josiah, James, Hezekiah and Brand ('Steve') — later helped run. Branching out, it became a quarrying business, Willis Brothers Quarries, which survived into the 1950s. The firm had pits in Burnley and Yarraville, from which it quarried the distinctive bluestone basalt from which many of Melbourne's early buildings, pavements and gutters were constructed.

Hannah Willis died of erysipelas in Prahran in November 1855, at age 40 and less than three years after settling there. She was buried in an unmarked grave in the St Kilda Cemetery. Her husband, James Brand Willis, survived her by 12 years. He died of obstructive pulmonary disease in September 1867 aged 58 and was buried in the Baptist section of the same cemetery. A son who died in 1864 aged 9 and a daughter who died at 30 in 1869 are buried in the same grave. Their burial place suggests that the family were Baptists, a denomination which had a large following in their native Cambridgeshire.

My great-grandfather, James Willis, was only six when he came to Australia, so he spent 76 of his 82 years here, all in Victoria. Little is known about his childhood and youth, but in May 1870 at age 24 he married Sarah Anne Brown (1845–1886), an immigrant from

Birmingham. They settled in Yarra Street, Richmond, and had eight children, three boys and five girls, of whom four died in early infancy.

James originally worked in the family quarrying business, Willis Bros., but in 1876 he and Sarah moved to Lake Rowan, midway between Benalla and Yarrawonga in north-eastern Victoria. The reason for going there was that he had selected a farming property north of the township, following the Selection Acts, which opened Victoria's vast pastoral holdings for closer settlement. Willis Bros., it seems, selected several nearby properties, and James moved to Lake Rowan to manage them on behalf of his brothers. He named his own 300-acre block 'Shelford' after their home village in Cambridgeshire. He lived and farmed on 'Shelford' for the next 52 years, until his death in 1928.

James's wife, Sarah, died at age 41 in 1886, ten years after the move to Lake Rowan. He survived her by 42 years. Both were buried in the local cemetery, north of the township along the main road to Yarrawonga. James was survived by only two of his 12 siblings — his younger brother Hezekiah ('Ky'), who died at 82 in 1931, and his oldest brother, Samuel ('Sam'), who died in 1933 at 90. By that time, their parents' descendants probably numbered many dozens. At the time I'm writing this, August 2022, the tally must be many hundreds if not thousands in a lineage that has reached the seventh and eighth generations spawned by the original immigrants to Prahran.

In 1887, the year after Sarah's death, James remarried. His second wife was Rachel Eliza Marie Letts (1863–1953) from Clare in South Australia. He had hired her as a housekeeper and governess to care for his four surviving children, aged 13, 9, 5 and 4. Rachel bore him eight more children, seven girls and one boy, all of whom survived into adulthood. The two sets of children, Sarah's and Rachel's, referred to each other as his 'first' and 'second' families. They all got along reasonably well together, but I've been told that the children of the first regarded their generally much younger half-siblings of the second as more fractious than they were.

James became a respected community leader at Lake Rowan. He was a Justice of the Peace (JP); and it was he who about 1883 persuaded his fellow settlers that the town needed a Protestant church. But what kind of church — Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist or some other? My Dad told me that that James investigated all the options and decided that a Congregational church would be best for Lake Rowan. The reason was that each Congregational church was an autonomous self-governing entity that was not beholden to bishops, synods, presbyteries and governing councils elsewhere. For that reason, Congregational churches were also called 'Independent' churches. The Congregational churches were, moreover, doctrinally and liturgically 'middle-of-the-road' and therefore more likely to be able to accommodate people from diverse religious backgrounds. He became the church secretary. One knock-on effect of establishing a Congregational church at Lake Rowan was that James's oldest son, Benjamin, later married Mary E.G. James, the oldest daughter of the Minister, the Rev. Thomas H. James.

My paternal grandfather, Benjamin ('Ben') James Willis (1873–1933), was the oldest surviving child of James Willis's first family. He had an older sister, Sarah, who died aged 1 year & 9 months six months before he was born. That was when the family was still living in Richmond, before they moved to Lake Rowan when Ben was 3.

My father, James ('Jim') Hamlyn Willis (1910–1995), was Ben's second son. When he was a student at Melbourne High School 1924–1927, he used to spend school holidays at 'Shelford', where he got to know his grandfather, step-grandmother, and his younger half-aunts of the second family who were still living at home. Many decades later, he recalled his grandfather as a good-humoured, white-bearded elderly chap who enjoyed romping round the house with his youngest grandchildren, the offspring of the oldest children of his second family who were visiting from homes nearby.

I'll finish this profile of James Willis by remarking that his first name is one that has been passed on through successive generations of his descendants, either as a first or second name. My grandson, James William Willis (born 2004), is the seventh to hold it in a direct line reaching back 200 years to his great-great-great-great-grandfather, James Brand Willis, the immigrant from Great Shelford. The lineage ascends like this: James William Willis→Anthony James Willis→Ian James Howie-Willis→James Hamlyn Willis→Benjamin James Willis→James Willis→James Brand Willis.

2. Sarah Anne Brown

As noted, Sarah Anne Brown (1845–1886) was from Birmingham, England's second city after London. The centre of the heavily industrial Midlands, it was then within Warwickshire — Shakespeare's home county. Little is known about her forebears, who can mostly be traced back only to her grandparents in the 1790s–early 1800s. They lived in central Birmingham near the present-day city centre, but this area was so heavily bombed during World War II that no trace of where they lived survives. Sarah's maternal forebears, the Joyner family, were originally from Claverdon, a village 8 kilometres west of Warwick, but the lineage goes back only to her great-grandfather.

Sarah's parents were William Brown and Elizabeth (née Joyner, 1815–1907). He was a clerk in a Birmingham ironmongery firm; she was a teacher. After his death, Elizabeth brought her three daughters and son to Australia in 1863. They settled in Prahran. The next year she took charge of a Quaker-sponsored school for poor children, the Scripture Reading School, which was supported by subscriptions from charitably-inclined women. The school was in Commercial Road, but in 1875 moved several blocks away to Eastbourne Street. Sarah taught in the school until her marriage in 1870. Her mother, Elizabeth, retained an interest in the school until her death at age 91 in 1907; Elizabeth also survived Sarah by 21 years.

Sarah had a hard, sad life. The pioneering life at Lake Rowan must have been difficult for a young city-bred woman who was pregnant for 4½ of the ten years she lived there. The first 'Shelford' house was a rough shack of planks cut from a single Murray pine (*Callitris columellaris*) that her husband and one of his brothers had cut down and pit-sawn when clearing the property. Sarah bore eight children in the 13 years between 1871 and 1884, an average of one baby every 19½ months. Of these, four died in infancy; three of them lived for only a few months and one survived just 1 year and 9 months. My daughter Rosemary expresses the view that whatever the physical cause of death given on Sarah's death certificate, she died of a broken heart. No woman, Rosie avers, can lose so many little children and not be prostrated by grief.

3. Thomas Henry James

Thomas Henry James (1850–1907) was my father's maternal grandfather, the father of my Grandma Willis, whom I discussed in the previous chapter. Rev. James, as he was known for much of his life in Australia, was a Congregational minister. A Cornishman, he had grown up Anglican. He was born on 27 April 1850 near Blackwater, about 5 kilometres north-east of Redruth. He was the son of Thomas James, a miner, farmer and former inn-keeper who had been born at Kenwyn near Truro in 1828. His mother was Michel (née Kent/Kant/Cant, born 1827), a tailoress from St Agnes on the coast north of Blackwater. Thomas Snr. and Michel married in the Anglican church at St Agnes on the last day of 1849. Michel, the daughter of a miner called Michael Kant, was illiterate because she signed her marriage certificate with her 'mark' — a 'X'. She and Thomas seem to have already produced a daughter, Jane, whose birth year was 1849. Michel died when Thomas Jnr. was an infant, and thereafter he was

raised by his paternal grandmother, Juliana James (née Terrill, 1800–1878). By 1861, when Thomas Jnr. was 10, Thomas Snr. had remarried, to a woman from Gwennap called Rosina who subsequently bore him at least two children, a daughter Mary and a son John.

Thomas Henry James, like his father and both grandfathers, became a miner. In Cornwall that meant either or both of tin and copper mining. He married in the Registry Office in Redruth at the age of 19½ on 13 March 1870. His bride was Emily Giles (1851–1918), who was six months younger than him and had not yet turned 19. Though both were Anglicans, they married in a civil ceremony because they had suddenly decided to emigrate to Australia and did not wish to wait the obligatory three weeks after the 'calling of the banns' (i.e. announcement of their intention to marry) by a church. They then travelled up to London. Several days later they left for Moreton Bay (Brisbane) in Queensland aboard a sailing ship, the *Indus*. The voyage took four months.

My father later wrote that Thomas and Emily voyaged around Cape Horn; but I think he might have been confused, because that route was against the prevailing winds. The usual route took advantage of the westerlies. It ran south along the west coast of Africa, round the Cape of Good Hope, then east across the Southern Ocean, taking advantage of the winds in the 'Roaring Forties', and on to Australia. The journey 'home' to Britain was east across the Pacific, round dangerous Cape Horn, then north-east up the South Atlantic Ocean.

After reaching Brisbane on 21 July 1870, Thomas and Emily took a local ship up the coast to Rockhampton. Thomas then travelled 320 kilometres west to Copperfield near Clermont in the Peak Downs district, where he had secured a job as a station overseer. He left Emily with friends in Rockhampton for several weeks, allowing him time to find accommodation. Her adventurous journey by wagonette to join him took 12 days. The housing awaiting her was a windowless bark hut with an earthen floor. Their first of their five children, Mary Elizabeth Giles James, my Grandma Willis, known to the family as 'Polly', was born there two years later, on 3 May 1872.

Thomas and Emily remained at Copperfield for about three years. In 1873 they moved south to Victoria, where Thomas wished to seek his livelihood on the Victorian goldfields. Leaving Emily and 'Polly' in Melbourne, he went straight to Bendigo, where he found a job in one of the mines as an underground supervisor. Wife and daughter followed him as soon as he was settled there. Four more children arrived over the next 13 years, two girls and two boys. The last of them was my 'Aunty James', Mable Amelia Claremont ('Clarey') James (1886–1967).

As miners do, Thomas moved to where mining jobs were available. By 1883 he was in Chewton, 46 kilometres south of Bendigo and only 4 kilometres south-east of Castlemaine. By this time he was a lay preacher in the local Congregational Church, having been strongly influenced by Congregationalist work associates. Early the next year, 1884, he became a full-time lay pastor at Gunbower, near the Murray River 117 kilometres north of Bendigo, where he had charge of several small preaching places in the surrounding district. The church headquarters in Melbourne was pleased with the 'abundant success' of the Congregational cause there under his leadership. He remained there for the next three years, until receiving his call to the Lake Rowan church early in 1887.

Thomas, Emily and their five young children moved to Lake Rowan during the first half of 1887. As well as the church there, he maintained preaching places at nearby Pelluebla and Boweya and Peechelba further afield to the north-east. Nothing now remains of the Lake Rowan church, but during the 1880s and beyond it was a thriving cause, and the centre of local community life.

Professionally, Thomas's appointment to Lake Rowan was an upward step. On taking charge of the church there he was ordained into the Congregational ministry. Henceforth he was the Reverend Thomas H. James, a title he retained until his death 20 years later.

Rev. James remained at Lake Rowan until 1894, when he transferred to Rutherglen, in the Murray Valley 70 kilometres to the north-east. Rutherglen, the prosperous centre of a viticultural region, was a larger cause. He remained there until his death at age 57 in August 1907. Shortly before his death he received and accepted a call to Maldon, a goldfields town 18 kilometres north-west of Castlemaine. He could not take up the appointment because he fell ill with successive bouts of bronchitis and then pneumonia. He died in the Rutherglen manse six weeks after the death of his only surviving son, 24-year-old Fred James, a journalist who was a chronic asthmatic and possibly had tuberculosis as well. Fred's death shocked Thomas deeply, and possibly hastened his own death. He was buried in the Rutherglen-Wahgunyah Cemetery in the same grave as Fred. I've visited the grave on several occasions.

4. Emily Giles

Like her husband Thomas, Emily Giles (1851–1918) grew up Anglican in Cornwall. Her family was from Kea, 4.5 kilometres south of Truro. Her father, Richard Giles (1822–1869) was the verger at the local church, All Hallows, but he was also a sometime mine agent, which took him away from Kea periodically. His wife, Elizabeth née Pryor (1818–1893), gave birth to Emily during one of these sojourns away from Kea, when they were at Worlbury near Baldhu, a mining village 5 kilometres west of Truro.

Emily was one of several children. These included an older brother, Charlie, who emigrated to South Australia before Emily and Thomas James went to Queensland and might have persuaded them to follow him. There was also a domineering older sister. Late in life, Emily told my Dad, the fourth and last of her grandchildren, the story of how she stopped the sister bossing her. She grabbed her sister by the hair, threw her to the ground and banged her head up and down. After that thrashing, the sister left her alone.

Emily's father, Richard Giles, died in White Pine county, Nevada, USA, in 1869, the year before Emily and Thomas James married and left Cornwall for Australia. Aged 47, he had gone there as a miner. His widow, Elizabeth née Pryor, later migrated to Australia and settled in Bendigo, where she died aged 75 in 1893. Why Bendigo? Perhaps it was because Emily and Thomas James were there. Her grandchildren were also there, because at least two of Emily and Thomas's children were born there; and her son Charlie Giles's daughter, Polly, later settled and married there.

When Emily was widowed in 1907, the Congregational Church allowed her and her unmarried daughter, the 21-year-old Claremont, to remain living in the manse. Thomas had left little money, so they supported themselves by taking in boarders. Claremont had been engaged to a young trainee minister, her father's assistant, but he eloped with the church organist. That she had been jilted and never married were humiliations that my 'Aunty James' could never forget. She lived with my parents for most of the last eight years of her life; and these were topics she spoke about ruefully as she slipped into dementia. To our shame, we her Willis great-nephews and -nieces found these stories amusing.

Our amusement must have been hurtful. Little did we appreciate how circumscribed Aunty's life had been in the small world of a country manse during the late Victorian-Edwardian era. Nor did we understand that few career options beyond marriage awaited the genteel youngest daughters of clergymen, who, if single, were expected to remain at home and care for their parents. Further, we could not appreciate that until she began receiving the old age pension, she had no income but was entirely dependent on the grace and favour of others — first her parents, then her sister Polly and her family, and finally her nephew Jim Willis and his family. *Mea maxima culpa!* My profound regrets, Aunty! I still feel guilty

having been so obtuse! I wish I had been more sensitive and sympathetic. If you're looking down on me from on high, please accept this belated apology!

In 1913 both Emily and Claremont moved to Stanley in north-western Tasmania to live with Polly and Ben Willis, i.e. Emily's oldest daughter and her son-in-law. Polly and Ben had been married by her father in his Rutherglen church on 19 January 1898. They had two sons, Rupert Allan (born December 1898) and James Hamlyn (born January 1910), both born during the time that their parents lived in Yarram, Gippsland, where Ben was the accountant at the local branch of the Bank of Australasia. He was promoted and posted to Stanley as the manager of the branch in 1913. Emily lived the last five years of her life in Stanley. She died there of diabetes at age 67 on 9 September 1918, two months before the end of World War I. She was buried in the local cemetery, where her grave remained unmarked for the next 85 years, until her Australian Willis great-grandchildren had a bronze memorial plaque installed there in 2003.

After her mother's death, Claremont continued living with Polly and Ben in Stanley. When Ben was transferred to his last posting with the bank, Nathalia (in the Murray Valley between Echuca and Numurkah) in 1925, she accompanied them. She then lived with them at Ferny Creek when Ben retired in 1933. Polly and Claremont lived on together at Ferny Creek after Ben died at the end of that year. They remained there until Polly's death in November 1959. Claremont — 'Aunty James' — then lived with us in Brighton until going into full-time care several months before she died in February 1967.

Neither Emily nor Thomas James ever returned to Cornwall. They had joined the great nineteenth century Cornish diaspora prompted by the decline of mining in Cornwall and the burgeoning opportunities in overseas mining. In 'new' places like the US, Canada, South Africa and Australia, Cornish 'hard-rock' mining skills were in demand. Wherever gold, silver-lead-zinc and copper mining fields opened, 'Little Cornwalls' sprang up as Cornish miners and their families congregated there. In Australia, mining towns like Bendigo, Castlemaine & Ballarat in Victoria, Broken Hill in NSW, Mount Morgan in Queensland, Moonta, Kadina & Wallaroo in South Australia, and Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie & Great Boulder in Western Australia all had Cornish communities.

Both Emily and Thomas missed Cornwall greatly. At church socials, Thomas amused his congregation by telling Cornish stories and jokes, gently poking fun at his countrymen's eccentricities. This greatly irritated Emily, who would later reproach him, "Can't understand 'ee at all, getting up there an' making a fool of thine own countrymen!" Perhaps the mocking masked homesickness. My Uncle Rupert Willis, who was eight when his Grandpa James died and 19 when Emily did, once told me that although his Cornish grandparents appreciated the opportunities Australia had opened for them, they felt 'nostalgic yearnings for Cornwall and its people and gentle climate'. He also said that in later life Thomas's great pleasure was sitting and yarning with other expatriate Cornishmen like himself.

5. William Howie

I have already said much about my Scottish great-grandfather, William Howie (1824–1861), in 'Untangling', the first section of this chapter. Recapitulating, he was an iron moulder from Fenwick in Ayrshire who emigrated to Geelong in 1852 at the age of 28. Five years later, in 1857, he married another Scottish immigrant, Margaret née Pringle (1827–1905), who bore him a daughter and two sons. He died at home of an enteric-type disease on 27 August 1861, leaving Margaret pregnant with her second son, who was named William after his late father. He was buried in the Pringle family plot in what is now called the Geelong Eastern Cemetery.

William was born in Fenwick, Ayrshire, the third of six children and the second of two sons of William Howie (1770–1844), a wright (i.e. joiner), and Mary (née Wyllie, 1786–

1864), both of whom were Fenwick-born. Fenwick, a historic village with a population of about 1,000, is 6 kilometres north-east of Kilmarnock and 30 kilometres south-west of Glasgow.

The forebears of William Howie Snr. had lived in Fenwick for at least three generations since the 1660s, but their ancestors were from 'Lochgoin' farm. The 'Lochgoin' farmhouse is a lonely, isolated dwelling in the bleak and desolate Fenwick moors 7.5 kilometres north-east of Fenwick. Family tradition maintains that the original Howies were three French brothers surnamed 'Hoi' (also spelt 'Hoy' and pronounced 'oh-wee'), Waldensians, followers of Peter Waldo (1140–1205) of Lyons, an early religious reformer whose teachings the Catholic Church condemned as heretical. The Hoi brothers are said to have fled to Scotland in the 1170s to escape the persecution of the Waldensians. One of them settled on 'Lochgoin' and built the farmhouse there about 1176. 'Lochgoin', once nicknamed 'Methuselah Farm', is reputedly the oldest continually occupied farmhouse in Britain. Over time, 'Hoi' transmuted into 'Howie' (pronounced 'how-wee')

'Lochgoin' and Fenwick became famous as Covenanter strongholds during the political and religious turmoil of the second half of the 17th century. The Covenanters, religious dissenters, upheld Presbyterianism and resisted the attempts by the Stuart kings to impose Episcopalian (Anglican) forms of liturgy and church governance upon the church in Scotland. Under the later Stuart kings, the Covenanters were persecuted, and many were killed. Because of its remoteness, 'Lochgoin' became a hideout for Covenanters fleeing the government troops. Nowadays a section of the farmhouse is a Covenanter museum; and a Covenanter memorial sits atop a low rise a couple of hundred metres away. The Howies belonged to the radical 'Cameronian' faction of the Covenanters. As a result of this tradition of religious dissidence, the Howies of 'Lochgoin' and in Fenwick were dissenters, never members of the 'Establishment', either religious or political.

William Howie Jnr. departed Scotland with the assistance of a locally organised emigration scheme. Fears that places like Fenwick were becoming overpopulated lay behind such schemes. Unless the excess population could be syphoned off elsewhere, the argument went, unemployment and destitution would be the consequence. Local committees raised funds to assist their citizens to emigrate to the colonies. Goldrush-era Victoria was a popular destination for young, single tradesmen like William. Ample work awaited him in Geelong, which during the 1850s was experiencing a building boom. It was already the main centre for the prosperous Western District wool industry; the nearby goldfields then added to the wealth flowing through the city. William is said to have made the ornate wrought-iron main gates of the Geelong Hospital, which opened in 1853, and to have worked on 'Corio Villa', Geelong's famous 'iron house' constructed in 1856 from prefabricated wrought-iron sections imported from Scotland.

William's oldest child, Mary (1857–1943), married a Lake Rowan farmer, Gilbert Holmes. Indirectly, she became responsible for Dad meeting Mum. I'll explain that later. His second child was my Grandpa Charlie Howie; and I'll also come back to him later. His youngest child, William, born after his death, who became a farrier, died single at age 29. The Howie surname lives on in William's Australian-born descendants of the fourth, fifth and sixth generations. Very few of the descendants now bear it, however, because either the males of the name didn't pass it on, or the females changed their names on marrying.

6. Margaret Pringle

Margaret Pringle (1827–1905) arrived in Geelong aboard the *Statesman* at age 24 on 4 September 1851. She travelled with her older brother, William, having embarked in London on 10th June that year. She was the tenth and youngest child of Charles Pringle (1789–1879)

and his wife Elizabeth née Melrose (1792–1860), who had five sons and five daughters. In Geelong Margaret and William joined the rest of the family, who had arrived there in November 1849 aboard the *Travancore*, one of the 18 ships hired by the enterprising Presbyterian minister, Dr Thomas Dunmore Lang, to bring Scottish Presbyterian migrants to Australia.

I have no idea why Margaret and William Pringle didn't travel with the rest of the family in 1849 but followed two years later. William didn't survive for long — he died from hydrocephalus (dropsy of the brain: an excess of cerebrospinal fluid) at age 41 in March 1857, a week before Margaret's marriage.

Margaret was born on 21 July 1827 at 'Carrington Barnes', a prosperous farm her father managed near the small village of Carrington, Midlothian, 15 kilometres south-east of Edinburgh. She was baptised in the church there a month later, on 19 August. Charles Pringle was the factor (estate manager) to the 5th Duke of Buccleuch, whose dynastic seat, Dalkeith Palace, was 7 kilometres north of Carrington.

After retiring as the factor, Charles and his wife decided to try their luck in Australia. Among the few ancestral heirlooms I possess are two sea-chests that Elizabeth Pringle brought to Geelong. Both Charles and Elizabeth were born in Temple, a small village only 1.5 kilometres south of Carrington, and both were baptised there. Temple is historically famous for having been where the mediaeval Knights Templar maintained their preceptory or main base in Scotland during the 1100s–1200s. The village name reflects this link, though the Templars called their preceptory Balantrodoch. The ruins of the preceptory chapel are all that remain of the Knights' 180-year occupation.

On settling in Geelong, Charles Pringle worked for a time as a cartage contractor, but he was later described as a 'gentleman', i.e. someone of independent means. In Scotland as the factor to a duke, he had been an influential figure in the community. His surviving sons' occupations reflected his status: one was a Presbyterian minister, another a silk merchant and a third a 'gentleman' farmer. His older daughters contracted 'good' marriages to respectable citizens in Geelong. Margaret continued living at home until her marriage at age 29. On her marriage certificate she gave 'domestic duties' as her occupation.

Margaret met her future husband, William Howie, at the family church in Geelong, the United Presbyterian Church in Ryrie Street. They married there on 18 March 1857. She was 29 and he was 33. Her first baby, Mary Melrose Howie, was born later that year; and that invites speculation over whether or not Margaret was already pregnant.

Presumably Margaret's large family attended the wedding service, but as William had no relatives in Australia, the bride's guests probably outnumbered the groom's. His best man was his brother-in-law, John Wilson. Margaret and William had only four years and four months together before he died at age 34, leaving her pregnant and with two small children, one age four and the other two.

Life for Margaret was hard during her 44-year widowhood, especially while her children were young and before her two sons began work. She survived on handouts from her parents and other family members. She seems to have taken solace in religion. One of her letters to the oldest of her grandsons, my Uncle Charl Howie (1886–1971), has survived. As a boy during the 1890s he lived with her in Geelong for a while to help her with errands. That was probably after her second son, the unmarried William Jnr., died from the after-effects of typhoid fever in 1891. After Charl returned home to Creswick she wrote to him to remind him to be a 'guid' boy and to read the 'guid book' (Bible) each day.

Margaret died from a brain tumour at age 77 in Geelong on 9 May 1905. Like her husband, she was buried in the Pringle family grave in the Geelong Eastern Cemetery.

7. Joseph Arthur Harris

Joseph Arthur Harris (1830–1889) was a Cornish miner who had been born at Gwennap, 4.5 kilometres south-east of Redruth. Not much is known about his early life, but he was the son of James Harris (1805–1872), a teacher who had been born at Truro, and Mary Ann Nicholas (1811–1878), who was born at Merther, a hamlet 3 kilometres east of Truro. Alternatively — accounts vary — they were both born in Penryn (also called Gluvias) near Falmouth. James and Mary Ann married in St Agnes in September 1827. Joseph had two sisters, Mary and Harriet (who became a dressmaker and married a chap called Thomas Benbow). James Harris was the Gwennap schoolmaster. Joseph was baptised in Gwennap on 16 October 1830, suggesting that he was born late September or early October that year.

'Harris' is an interesting surname with two derivations. If it's English, it's a patronym (father's name) from 'Harry's' (as in 'Harry's son'); but if it's Cornish it's a toponym (geographical name), from 'hir-ros', meaning 'long heathland'.

Joseph arrived in Victoria about 1852, perhaps aboard the *Nepaul* in October that year. He settled in Creswick, where he worked as a miner during the gold rushes that were fast turning the former 'Creswick's Creek' pastoral settlement into a boom town. On 2 July 1858 he married an immigrant from Cornwall, Mary Metcalf Blight (1828–1895), whom he had met in Creswick. He was a Wesleyan Methodist, she was Anglican. They were married in the Wesleyan parsonage with two witnesses present: James Tregaskas, by his surname almost certainly Cornish and possibly one of Joseph's fellow miners; and Jane Crisp, who was possibly the wife of the officiating minister, Rev. John Crisp.

Joseph and Mary had six children — three boys and three girls. My maternal grandmother, Mary Anne ('Annie') Jane Harris (later Mrs Howie, 1867–1935), was the second of the daughters and the second youngest.

At some point after his marriage, Joseph quit mining to run a coach service between Creswick and Ballarat. Later he was the proprietor of livery stables on the western side of Albert Street, Creswick, on the site of the present RSL* hall. Such a business was the equivalent of the present-day hire-car firm, i.e. people could hire an equipped horse for short-term use.

Joseph subsequently deserted his wife and children, probably in 1871. Family tradition is that he took up with a local barmaid, moved to Ballarat with her and later ran a hotel in South Melbourne. He occasionally returned to Creswick to see his children. His de facto wife called herself 'Mrs Harris' although they never married formally. She was one Annie Mader (née Reynolds, 1842–1901), who had been born in Preston, Lancashire and had migrated to Victoria with her parents at the age of 12. She had married in Creswick at the age of about 18 or 19 to a chap called George Mader, by whom she had five children. George Mader seems to have been a German and a baker. Annie bore four more children to Joseph, all of whom took the Harris surname. Two of these, her sons Walter (age 26) and Ernest (19), survived her when she died in 1901 at age 59.

There are no family stories of Joseph's two families ever having had anything to do with each other. An intriguing possibility is that my grandmother Annie Howie (née Harris) and her five siblings would have had Harris half-nieces and/or nephews if Walter and Ernest Harris had produced children. And in that case my Mum and her brothers would have Harris half first cousins they never knew anything about. When I suggested this to Mum as I was untangling the details of Joseph's second family, she was shocked. She was very family-oriented, so the possibility she might have cousins she didn't know about disturbed her greatly.

* Returned Services League, i.e. military veterans' organisation.

L'affaire Harris-Mader must have been a great scandal in 1871 Creswick. At the time, Joseph's children ranged in age from two to twelve years, and Annie's from three to nine. The older children were probably in school together; and if school kids then were anything like what they were in my day, they would have suffered the snickering and whispering about their parents' liaison. The Wesleyan congregation would have been horrified. Joseph's deserted wife and children would have had to endure embarrassed sympathy and outraged tut-tutting. Joseph's desertion of his family would probably have been a stigma they bore for years afterwards. Little wonder that Joseph wasn't much talked about after his departure, nor that my Mum, her siblings and Harris cousins never knew that in Walter and Ernest Harris they had another two uncles.

Joseph died on 10 December 1889 at age 59 from a haemorrhage caused by a pulmonary (lung) abscess. I guess that he probably suffered from miners' phthisis, i.e. silicosis, a disease afflicting many Cornish miners. He died at the home he shared with Annie Mader, at 76 Packington Street, Kew (eastern Melbourne suburb). He was buried in the Wesleyan section of the Boroondara Cemetery, High Street, Kew, possibly without religious rites. His death was registered by 35-year-old Ulrick C. Mader, Annie's third son, who was a Carlton hotel owner. Ulrick had obviously remained in contact with his mother, and presumably Joseph too. He later registered his mother's death.

About 1987 I took Mum to see the house in Kew where Joseph had died, and then to his grave. She was interested to visit these relics of a grandfather who had died 17 years before she was born. By then she had got used to the idea that her errant maternal grandfather had produced a second family, and that she might still have living half first cousins.

8. Mary Metcalf Blight

Mary Metcalf Blight (1828–1895), the fourth of my four Cornish great-grandparents, was born at Lower Porthpean, a small village above a beach on St Austell Bay. Porthpean, a Cornish name meaning 'little cove' in English, is only 2.3 kilometres south of St Austell, the third largest of Cornwall's cities.

Mary was the daughter of Henry Blight (1786–1854), a miner and innkeeper, and Jane Penall (also spelt Penhall & Penhale, 1800–1882). Her middle name, Metcalf, was her maternal grandmother's maiden name.

Like Harris, Blight and Penhall are both interesting Celtic Cornish surnames. Blight, originally a nickname, means 'wolf'; and Penhall means 'top (or end) of the moor'. I'm proud of these names because they signify that my ancestors once spoke the old Celtic Cornish language, which nowadays is often called 'Kernewek'.

Henry Blight and Jane Penhall were married in the Holy Trinity Anglican church in St Austell on 12 May 1822. Jane had been born in St Just in Roseland (south-west of Porthpean, on the Carrick Roads (inlet) opposite Falmouth. She was the daughter of a fisherman, Ralph Penhall (1770–1827), who drowned at sea off Trenarren (on St Austell Bay north of Porthpean) with his 11-year-old son and namesake, Ralph Jnr., presumably while fishing.

At the 1841 census Henry and Jane were living in Lower Porthpean. He was listed as age 55 and an innkeeper; her age was given as 40; and they had four daughters — Jane (age 19), Prudence (16, later Mrs Pascoe), Mary (14, later Mrs Harris) and Catherine (12).

By the 1851 census, Prudence had married Richard Pascoe, a tailor, was living in Fowey (a seaport 12 kilometres east of St Austell) and had four young children aged between one and eight. Mary Blight, age 24 and a milliner, was living with them.

Perhaps her father's death was a turning point in Mary's life. Little more than two years later she was on her way to Australia. She sailed aboard the *Fitzjames*, which reached Sydney on 1 April 1857. Her entry in the passenger list described her as a domestic servant. I don't

know how she came to be in Creswick and marrying Joseph Harris within 16 months of landing in Australia, but perhaps she had learnt that goldrush-era Victoria offered more opportunities than Sydney.

Whatever prompted Mary to go south, she spent the rest of her life in Creswick. That was where all her six children were born and grew up. And after her husband abandoned them about 13 years into the marriage, that's where she opened the business that became her livelihood. It was a smallgoods (delicatessen) shop on Albert Street, No. 62. It occupied the narrow shopfront building between her husband's former livery stables and the fish shop at No. 64 that her son-in-law Charlie Howie later bought and converted into his plumber's shop and family residence. (The building Mary lived and worked in fell into disrepair, was demolished and not replaced during the 1960s.)

By this time Mary opened her shop, she had been joined by her mother and one of her three sisters. They had emigrated from Cornwall to Creswick in 1862. Her mother, the former Jane Penhall, lived with her. Jane died at home in May 1882 from 'senility, catarrh and debility', which probably means the combined effects of dementia, old age and a severe nasal infection. She was buried in the Creswick Cemetery two days later.

Jane Penhall/Blight left behind an intriguing story about her father, Ralph Penhall Snr., who had been a soldier during the Napoleonic wars. Jane's third grandson, Richard ('Dick') Harris (1865–1943), suffered hip dysplasia as a boy, necessitating long periods with his leg in traction. To help him while away the time, his Grandma Jane used to sit with him and tell him stories from her early life. One of these was about her father's time as a soldier. Ralph Penhall, a freemason, was captured by French troops somewhere. As he was being marched along the road, a group of mounted French officers came riding up. One of them somehow recognised him as a fellow freemason. Ralph was taken from among his fellow prisoners and given favourable treatment. Instead of being confined in prison for the duration of his captivity, he was assigned to farm work. Dick Harris passed the story on to his daughter Lilian, my 'Aunty Lil Hunt', and she repeated it to me in 1987.

Which daughter accompanied Jane to Creswick in 1862 is uncertain. It wouldn't have been Prudence, who remained in Fowey; and it mightn't have been Jane, the eldest, who predeceased her mother. My guess is that it was the youngest, Catherine, who would have been about 53 when her mother died. Whichever daughter it was, she had married and produced two daughters of her own — Jane (Mrs Cox) and Catherine ('Katie', Mrs Owen). Katie Owen, whom I remember as 'Aunty Katie', was a firm friend as well as first cousin of her three female Harris cousins in Creswick. She was later the matron at the School of Forestry in Creswick when my Dad was a student there in the late 1920s.

After they were both widowed, Harriet ('Hetty') Harris (Mrs Stanford) and Katie Owen lived together in Elsternwick. They used to visit my family and we used to visit them. They died together in the same freak accident in 1947. Aunty Katie apparently fainted and collapsed while trying to light the gas stove early one morning. As she fell, she turned on the gas taps. The house filled with gas, killing her, Aunty Hetty and Aunty Polly (Mrs Keast, an elderly widowed cousin who shared their house). Aunty Katie's son, Les Owen, found them dead when he went to visit his mother several days later. Fortunately for him, he wasn't smoking as he let himself into the house.

All this, of course, happened 52 years after Mary Blight/Harris's death. Mary died at home in Albert Street on 1 October 1895 at age 68. The cause of death was 'bronchitis and asphyxia', from which she had been suffering for a week. Her son-in-law, Charles Howie, my Grandpa, registered her death and was a witness to her funeral. She was buried with Wesleyan rites two days later in the same grave as her mother. Her obituary in the *Creswick Advertiser* described her as 'a devout member of the Wesleyan Church, … highly esteemed for her quiet and amiable disposition, and the consistent integrity of her character'.

In 2007 her five Willis great-grandchildren installed a bronze plaque on the grave as a tribute to Mary and Jane, from whom they inherit their 'H'-type mitochondrial DNA. (This is the most common form of 'mtDNA' in western Europe and comprises between 30% and 40% of all mtDNA in Britain.)

Proportions of ancestry

Looking at where my ancestry is from, I could say that by descent I'm roughly half Cornish, quarter English and quarter Scottish. The Cornish, of course, are English too; but at the time my great-grandparents lived there, if not later, they regarded themselves as a nation apart from the *Seyson* and *Sowsesow* (Englishmen and -women — 'Saxons') east of the Tamar River, the border with Devon.

Margaret's ancestry is a little different. As the next chapter will show, by descent she's about half English (no Cornish), seven-sixteenths Scottish and one-sixteenth Irish.

Put all that together, and we can say that our three children are 37.5% English, 34.4% Scottish, 25.0% Cornish and 3.1% Irish.

Beyond them, this game of percentages of ancestry becomes more complicated, and perhaps meaningless. For Rosie's children there will be more Cornish, more English and more Irish, but no more Scottish. For Tony's children there'll be more Cornish, more Scottish and more Irish, but no more English. And for Katie's children it will be the Netherlands (a quarter), more Cornish, English and Scottish, and some Swedish (one-sixteenth) too but no more Irish.

Grandparents

In the pages above I have mentioned all four of my grandparents; and some of them will keep coming back into my story. Two of them died before I was born, but despite that all four of them have shaped my self-perceptions. They were:

1. Benjamin James Willis

Ben Willis (1873-1933) was born in Richmond on 10 August 1873 but grew up on his parents' 'Shelford' farm at Lake Rowan, where they moved when he was only three. He didn't greatly like farming. He quite enjoyed the routines of growing and harvesting wheat, oats and hay, but disliked working with the farm animals — horses, sheep and cattle. A deciding factor in his choice of career was the bout of rheumatic fever he suffered at 13, about the time his mother died. This left him with a weakened heart valve, so instead of helping his father on the farm when he left school the next year, he joined the Bank of Australasia, at its St James branch, west of Lake Rowan and about 5 kilometres from 'Shelford'. He walked through the bush to and from the bank each day. So he wouldn't get lost, he cut notches in the trunks of trees along the way.

Largely self-taught, Ben was well educated in astronomy, the natural sciences, music and literature. He was also a craftsman who could turn his hand to carpentry and metalwork. An unassuming chap, he was an excellent role model for his two sons, Ru and Jim, who each became eminent scientists Ru a pathologist and Jim a botanist.

Ben met his future wife, Polly James, at the Lake Rowan Congregational church, where her father was the minister. After a long — three-year — engagement, they married in her father's church at Rutherglen in 1898. They then went to live in Yarram, in south-east Gippsland, over 500 kilometres and several days' travel from the folks at home in Lake

Rowan and Rutherglen. Ben spent the next 15 years as the accountant at his bank in Yarram. Both Ru and Jim were born during the Yarram years.

The next 12 years, 1913–1925, were spent in Stanley, north-eastern Tasmania, where Ben was the bank manager. His final appointment, 1926–1933, was as the manager at the bank's Nathalia branch, in the mid-Murray Valley in northern Victoria, 127 kilometres west of Rutherglen.

Ben took an early retirement at age 60 in 1933. He, Polly and his sister-in-law Claremont moved into the 'tramcar' house he had had built at Ferny Creek in the Dandenong Ranges. He only had a few months to enjoy his retirement because he dropped dead from a heart attack there on 17 December 1933 just six weeks after attending Mum's and Dad's wedding in Creswick.

I never met my grandfather Ben because he died four years before I was born. From what I've learnt about him, he seems to have been an amiable, good-humoured chap who was popular and much respected in his large extended family, and admired in the communities where he lived and worked for his bank. My Dad once told me that his father had been his best friend.

Ben's continuing connection with his family at Lake Rowan was what led to Dad meeting Mum. At the end of 1927 when Dad finished at Melbourne High School, where he had received his secondary education, he applied for and was granted entry to the Victorian School of Forestry at Creswick to train as a forester. During that summer vacation, which he probably spent with his parents in Nathalia, he stayed for a time at 'Shelford' with his Grandpa James Willis. While there, he met Gilbert Holmes, one of his grandfather's neighbours. Gilbert was the husband of Mary Melrose Holmes née Howie (1857–1943), the sister of Charles Howie. Gilbert said to Dad, "When you get to Creswick, go and introduce yourself to Charlie Howie, my brother-in-law, and tell him I sent you. He lives in the main street only a short distance from your Forestry School."

Soon after arriving in Creswick, Dad arranged to visit the Howies one Saturday. As things turned out, Charlie Howie had to be elsewhere, so the daughter of the house, 21-year-old Mavis, was given the job of entertaining the young visitor to afternoon tea. She had to give up an afternoon's tennis to fulfil this duty, so she initially resented the 18-year-old Jim Willis, who was 3 years and 8 months her junior. Despite that, Jim kept visiting the Howies. They warmly welcomed him into their family circle, and before long he and Mavis were 'walking out together', as contemporary parlance put it. They became engaged after Dad graduated from the Forestry School at the end of 1930, and on 13 October 1933 they married in the Creswick Methodist Church. Mavis's grandmother had been married there 76 years earlier.

2. Mary ('Polly') Elizabeth Giles Willis (née James)

Polly Willis (1872-1959) was born at Copperfield, Queensland on 3 May 1872. As we have seen, her parents relocated to Bendigo when she was only about one year old. After her father joined the Congregational ministry in 1884, she moved with her family to Gunbower, Lake Rowan and finally Rutherglen, where she married Ben Willis on 19 January 1898 at age 26.

As a bank officer's wife, Polly greatly enjoyed the small-town prestige that was hers. Later in life she also basked in the reflected glory of her two clever sons, particularly that of her older son, Rupert, the eminent medical professor.

In the various towns where she and Ben lived, they took a prominent part in local community and cultural affairs, including the progress association, golf, church, drama and operatic society, and Polly was a leader in the women's groups. Houseproud and an excellent cook, she was often the chief judge of the cake-baking, fruit-preserving and jam-making

competitions at the annual fairs. Their civic contributions were greatly appreciated by the communities they came to live amongst. Thus, when they left Stanley in 1925, the townspeople presented them with a beautiful, hand-crafted ornamental side-table of local rosewood. (This item is another of the heirloom pieces of furniture passed down to me.)

Polly liked playing the role of the bank manager's wife — a *grande dame*, one of the local elite. She spent lavishly in entertaining and gift-giving. Ben, who deferred to her in most matters, passed his pay packet over to her and, foolishly, did not check her expenditure. A strange lapse for a banker who spent 50 years minding other people's money! She was a domineering woman, those most easily dominated including her husband and dependent younger sister Claremont. Her scowl signalled her displeasure, so Ben and Claremont became practised in taking the line of least resistance to avoid the scowling.

Widowed and living in retirement in Ferny Creek, Polly dropped most of her outside commitments. Penury and prolonged grieving were the reasons. Ben's superannuation payments were meagre, and his investments paid little, so she was obliged to receive the old age pension. Too proud to collect it from the Post Office herself, she sent Claremont instead. By living frugally and economising, they got by and even maintained their façade of gentility.

In Ferny Creek, Claremont became an active and effective volunteer with Red Cross, especially for its patriotic fundraising enterprises during World War II. Apart from several neighbours with whom she became friendly, Polly's main outside interest was the Methodist church in Sassafras, 3 kilometres up the Mount Dandenong Road from 'Regnans', her home in Hilton Road. Polly was the communion steward at the church; and she and Claremont dutifully walked there and back every Sunday morning, refusing offers of lifts from parishioners with cars. On my holidays with them, this exasperated me, because I would have enjoyed the rare pleasure of a ride in a car; and a 4-mile round trip was a long way for a little chap of four or five to walk.

Polly's other commitment was to her two sons and their families. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, she took on the self-appointed function of being her grandchildren's disciplinarian, which did not endear her to us. Perhaps my most pleasant encounter with her came when I was 21 and at Toorak Teachers' College. It was 1959, the year she died. I took Margaret to meet her. This was probably early in the year before her final illness, rapid decline and swift death after being diagnosed with liver cancer. She received us kindly, served us afternoon tea, and chatted amiably with us for the hour or so we remained with her before being collected by the friends we were travelling with. It was my last meeting with her. Perhaps she sensed that Margaret was the young woman I would marry — we married three years later — the next 'Mrs Willis', the mother of the next generation of her descendants. Be that as it may, she had a seeming serenity and contentment about her that I hadn't seen before. And so my final memory of my Grandma is a happy one.

3. Charles Pringle Howie

Charles Howie (1859-1941), commonly known as Charlie, was born in Geelong on 10 December 1859 to Scottish immigrant parents. He was a great Scottophile, and perhaps regarded himself as being as much Scottish as Australian. He probably didn't remember his father, William Howie from Fenwick, because he was only 20 months old when William died; but he was part of a large extended family of Pringle relatives who continued supporting his mother through her long widowhood.

Because cash was short, Charlie left school at the earliest opportunity, at about age 12, to be apprenticed to a pharmacist. His boss was a harsh, cruel task-master who verbally abused him, so he abandoned pharmacy and became a plumber's apprentice instead. After completing his apprenticeship he worked in Geelong for a while, but because work was more

plentiful on the goldfields, he relocated to Creswick at age 20, in 1880. At first he worked for another plumber, but in 1884 he established his own business, 'C.P. Howie'.

Qualified as both a plumber and gasfitter, Charlie was a skilled, painstaking tradesman. His plumbing business prospered. No job was too small or too big. He repaired umbrellas — a fiddly task he detested — and he dug the 6-kilometre trench and laid the water pipes from the reservoir, Russell's Dam, when the town was connected to a permanent water supply. His work changed over time. In the early years he worked for the mining companies at Allendale, north of Creswick, maintaining the air ducts in the mines. When a town gas supply was introduced 1886–1890, he installed the fittings in many of Creswick's public buildings, churches and homes. Other specialties were installing and maintaining windmills on the farming properties north and east of the town. His staple, however, was domestic plumbing installation and maintenance — making and fitting roof gutters and downpipes, constructing and installing corrugated iron water tanks, laying and repairing water pipes, fitting and repairing taps. He took pride in the durability of his work. A century later, some of his handiwork might still be in use, for instance the taps he installed with 'C.P. Howie' stamped on the handles. (A few years ago I donated one such tap to the Creswick Museum.)

A couple of years after Charlie arrived in Creswick he participated in the rescue effort at the 'New Australasian' mine disaster on 12 December 1882. The 'New Australasian', on the outskirts of the town at North Creswick, was one of the largest mines in the district. The mine began flooding at about 4.45 a.m. after the night-shift miners inadvertently broke into a flooded shaft. The mine flooded swiftly. The reason for the flooding was that the mines north of Creswick were of the 'deep lead' type; that is, the shafts were driven down through 80 to 150 metres of the surface volcanic rock to reach streams buried by the ancient lava flow. Side tunnels were then dug along the stream beds where gold-bearing gravels had accumulated. Subterranean water still percolated through the gravel, so the water had to be continually pumped out. Flooding was always a hazard in such mining. Of the 41 men working underground at the time, 14 escaped, leaving another 27 trapped in air-pockets in side-tunnels. Only five of the 27 could be rescued. Despite frantic rescue efforts over the next two days, the other 22, six of them Cornishmen, ran out of air and died. Charlie Howie joined the team operating the pumps in the attempts to drain the mine. Some 140 years later, the 'New Australasian' remains Australia's worst ever underground goldmining disaster.

Charlie was a man of firm religious faith. Brought up in his forebears' Presbyterianism in Geelong, he began attending the Creswick Presbyterian church when he settled in the town. The congregation cold-shouldered him. They were the town 'white-collar' elite — captains of the mining industry, bank managers, lawyers, large property owners, proprietors of the town's major stores; he was only a plumber, a 'blue-collar' tradesman. Knowing he didn't fit in there, he began attending the Wesleyan church instead. And there he met the teenage Mary Anne Jane ('Annie') Harris (1867–1935), fifth child and second daughter of Mary Metcalf Harris née Blight, the deserted wife of Joseph Arthur Harris.

Charlie Howie and Annie Harris married on Boxing Day, 26 December 1885. He was 26, she was only 18. They would have nine children. In order they were: (1) Charles Pringle Jnr. ('Charl', 1886–1971); (2) Effie Melrose (1887–1892); (3) Norman Douglas ('Norm', 1889–1967); (4) Willie ('Bill', no middle-name, 1891–1984); (5) Reginald Harry ('Reg', 1893–1957); (6) Dorothy Mary Melrose (1895–1911); (7) Gordon Gilbert (1–17 November 1898); (8) Malcolm Ian ('Malc', 1900–1936); and Mavis Eileen (Mrs Willis, 1906–2002). I won't dwell on them now, but will simply say that six of them survived into adulthood: Charl and Norm, who were apprenticed to their father and became plumbers; Bill, who became a senior federal public servant in the Department of Supply; Reg, who became a Methodist minister; Malc, who was wheelchair-bound from age 16, but became a Methodist lay

preacher and an accomplished botanical artist; and Mavis married my Dad, became my Mum, and when she died at age 96 she was by far the longest-lived of her large clan.

Charlie Howie was a public-spirited chap, with many community involvements. He had a long association with Creswick's volunteer fire brigade, was its captain for a time, and was later awarded its long service badge. He was an enthusiastic freemason, and served as the master of Creswick's Havilah lodge. He was elected to the Creswick shire council but served only one three-year term. He was a member of the board of the Creswick hospital for many years and served twice as its president. During World War I, when three of his sons were serving overseas in the Australian Imperial Force, he chaired the Soldiers' Fathers' Association; and he was later secretary of the war memorial committee. He was also secretary to the committee which organised the 'Back to Creswick' functions for former citizens of the town. His longest commitment was to the Victoria Street Methodist Church and Sunday School, of which he was a trustee for many years. He was a teacher in the Sunday School for 54 years, many of these as its superintendent. In 2013 the Creswick Historical Society recognised his long service to the local community by including him on its Honour Roll — a bronze tablet of town benefactors outside the former Creswick Town Hall, two doors up Albert Street from the former Howie residence at No. 64.

Charlie was an upright citizen, an honest, ethical businessman, a meticulous craftsman, a loyal and reliable friend, and a devoted paterfamilias. He was not, however, a paragon. He was opinionated and regarded himself as an authority on subjects that interested him. At times he was impatient, short-tempered, and irascible. On one notorious occasion in the plumbing workshop, he flung a hammer at his son Norman's head. Norm ducked, and the hammer struck the door behind him, leaving a deep dent that Mum pointed out to us many decades later. Hardly surprising, was it, that neither Norm nor Charl wished to become their father's partners when they had finished their apprenticeships? To his chagrin, Charlie's hopes of a 'Howie & Sons' family plumbing business remained unfulfilled. Perhaps he felt somewhat appeased when Norm and Charl established the 'Howie Bros.' firm in Mildura and Red Cliffs after World War I. He spent some time with them helping get it started.

Within the family circle, Charlie was the dominant and domineering figure. Mum told me that on a visit home soon after she had married, she defied him for the first time in her life. He ordered her from the house and said she must never 'darken his door again'. She responded by saying that while her ailing mother and invalid brother Malcolm needed her, she'd keep returning home despite him. She'd called his bluff, so thereafter he meekly accepted that she was now independent of him, but that he still needed her.

Further, his marriage went through a bad patch in the years leading up to World War I. After the great depression of the 1890s, the gold mines began closing. The Creswick population went into long-term decline. There was less and less work around Creswick, so Charlie moved north to Warracknabeal, in the Wimmera district on the new frontier of agricultural settlement. He set up business there, and spent eight years in 'Warrack' 1908–1916, returning periodically to Creswick to visit the family.

Charlie's absence in Warracknabeal put enormous pressure on Annie, who struggled to care for her two invalid children, Dorothy and Malcolm, both of whom were seriously afflicted with a hereditary degenerative disease, spinal muscular atrophy, and entirely dependent on her care. She was also raising Mavis, who was only two when Charlie moved to Warracknabeal. She had to maintain the family home and its large garden, run the household, hold the family together, and try to keep up appearances among the townspeople. During this period Dorothy died at age 16 in 1911. And when World War I began in 1914, three of her sons — Charl, Bill and Reg — enlisted in the Army and were sent overseas, causing her enormous anxiety as the appalling death toll at Gallipoli and on the Western Front mounted. Eventually Annie had a nervous breakdown. Charlie had to quit Warracknabeal to resume his

life and responsibilities in Creswick. He eventually retired in 1931 at age 72, almost 52 years after settling in the town. He passed his business over to his last apprentice, Fred James.

Charlie died at the age of 81½ in the Colac Hospital on 21 June 1941 from the combined effects of a kidney stone and associated uraemia. At the time, he had been staying with his son, Rev. Reg Howie, and his family at the Methodist parsonage in Colac, where Uncle Reg was the minister. Mum, who was five months pregnant with my brother David, immediately took the train to Colac, taking me with her and leaving Dad and Ruth in Brighton. I guess she got there in time to be with her father before he died.

I do remember snatches of our time in Colac. I was 3½ at the time. The vast, cavernous two-storeyed parsonage was the biggest home I'd ever been in. I don't recall the trips there and back, but I remember being driven around town in Uncle Reg's car. I also remember Dad taking me by train from Brighton to Creswick for Grandpa's funeral. Mum remained behind in Brighton with Ruth, but Dad was due to help his brothers-in-law (Charl, Norm and Reg; Bill was working in India) carry Grandpa's coffin at the funeral. I didn't attend the services in the church or at the graveside but was left behind in the Howies' Albert Street house being looked after by someone I can't remember. After the funeral, various friends and relatives came back to the house for afternoon tea. The only one I can recall was my great-uncle, the Rev. Dick Harris, Grandpa's sole surviving brother-in-law, who told me I'd been a good boy for waiting so patiently. Afternoon tea over, Dad and I took a bus to Ballarat, and waited on the station for the Melbourne train to arrive. We sat there chatting about the station and its accoutrements in the gathering dusk. Given how slow the steam trains then were, we probably didn't get back home to Brighton until very late.

Charlie was a little chap, only 5 foot 5 inches (1.65 metres) tall. (His Willis grandchildren must have inherited more than their fair share of his genes!) Although short, he was nuggety, wiry and tough. Over 60 years of hard physical labour had kept him lean and trim. As a young man in Geelong he played Australian football for the famous Geelong 'Cats' in the then Victorian Football Association; and he continued playing in Creswick for several seasons. He was proud of his muscular physique and physical fitness, which he maintained with a daily set of morning exercises. In his younger years he was a keen shooter, and even made his own cartridges; but his lifelong recreational passion was fishing. He fished all the creeks, dams, lakes and reservoirs of the Creswick district. He kept a worm farm in a tank in his back garden so that he would have a ready supply of bait.

Following his death, the long *Creswick Advertiser* obituary for Charlie was generous. After listing his community involvements, it observed that *'these offices helped fill in the life of this busy man until Creswick was part and parcel of him and he was part and parcel of it'*.

4. Mary Anne ('Annie') Jane Harris

Mary Anne ('Annie') Jane Harris (1867-1935) was only four years old when her parents separated. She couldn't have remembered much about her father, Joseph Harris, before he abandoned his wife and children in 1871. She was born at home in Creswick on 18 February 1867. She had three older brothers, Joseph Jnr. ('Joe'), James ('Jim') and Richard ('Dick'), and an older sister, Harriet ('Hetty'). The sixth child of the family, Charlotte ('Lotty') was born two years later. Joe and Annie were named after their father and mother, and the others were all given the names of kinfolk in Cornwall.

Like my Grandma Willis and her siblings, Annie and hers were raised in an Australian Cornish household. They were wholly Cornish by descent, as indicated by the genealogies I've developed for them with the aid of Ancestry.com's online family tree-building facility. Because we five Willis siblings have four great-grandparents out of eight who were Cornish, we're half Cornish by descent.

The Cornish influence in the Harris household must have been strong, because not only were the two parents Cornish immigrants, but a Cornish grandmother — Jane Blight née Penhall — lived with them. Annie and her siblings must therefore have grown up listening to many stories of the distant homeland at Britain's south-western extremity.

One legacy of the Cornish heritage is the making of Cornish pasties, a skill passed down from mother to daughter. When we Willis children were growing up in Brighton, Mum's large home-made pasties — two to a baking dish, made to her mother's recipe — were the main course at dinner during special family gatherings. My sisters would have learnt how to make them from Mum; and because I'm interested, I acquired the pasty-making skill as well. Unlike Mum, her mother and grandmother, I don't make my own pastry but buy it instead from the local supermarket.

We know little of Annie's girlhood other than that she was her father's favourite. On his trips back to Creswick to see his children, Joseph Harris used to make a special fuss of her. He used to pick her up, whirl her round and say, "You're my dear little Annie!"

Annie's marriage at 18 was unusual because she was so young and inexperienced. She had seen little of the world, and may never have travelled far from Creswick. She probably didn't need to, because the Creswick of the 1870s and 80s was a large and bustling goldfields town. She told my Mum that when she was a girl and young woman, Albert Street, the main thoroughfare through the centre of the town, had no fewer than 22 hotels along its 900-metre length — about one pub every 40 metres! On a Friday evening, when all the miners had come into town from the surrounding mines, the street was so crowded she couldn't push her baby's pram along the footpaths but had to use the road instead.

I've often wondered if Annie's reason for marrying so young was to escape from home. Her deserted mother struggled to make a living from her smallgoods shop. Marrying Charlie Howie would consequently have meant one less mouth for her mother to feed as well as conferring independence from parental supervision.

A more likely reason is that — as I've just discovered from her marriage certificate and the birth record of her first child — she was three months pregnant when she married. She wouldn't have been the first Cornish or Creswick girl to whom that had happened, no matter how strong their religious affiliations. She married on Boxing Day, 26 December 1885, not in Creswick but 123 kilometres away to the north-west in Stawell. She had possibly gone there to live with her oldest brother, Joe, and his family because her pregnancy was beginning to show. Marrying away from home in a distant town and on Boxing Day suggests that she might temporarily have left Creswick to avoid the embarrassment of being pregnant but unmarried. Whatever Annie's reasons for marrying so young, her 50-year marriage to Charlie Howie seems to have been grounded in mutual inter-dependence and the trust of the one for the other. Family tradition tells us that he was domineering, and she was self-effacing, but despite that the marriage endured.

The great influence in Annie's life was her Methodist faith. Her flowery but perceptive obituary in the *Creswick Advertiser* evoked something of this. It began like this:

> *One of life's really beautiful characters passed from this earthly vale on Tuesday morning when Death claimed Mrs Annie Howie….Of a self-effacing disposition, the late Mrs Howie had never figured greatly in the limelight of publicity; her church and her home were her principal spheres of activity, yet, withal, she had earned through her 68 years of life the love of a wide circle of friends such as is given to few people….*

Though I never knew my maternal grandmother, who died 2½ years before I was born, I've heard much about her from various relatives and acquaintances who knew her. It all suggests that she was a saintly woman — the one person among my forebears I know enough about to use that descriptor.

Annie's church involvements included the Sunday School, the choir, the Ladies' Guild, the youth group and the tennis club. It was through her influence that her husband became committed to the church and that her children also became lifelong adherents. One of her sons, Reg, went on to become a Methodist minister, and another, Malc, a lay preacher.

Beyond the church, she had few outside interests. The most important of them was the Creswick Soldiers' Mothers' and Wives' Association during World War I. She was president of this group, and, as such, officially opened the memorial fountain near the rotunda at the town centre. A commemorative plaque records this event.

Annie experienced much tragedy during her comparatively short life. She lost her first daughter, Effie, at age 4, apparently from peritonitis when the local doctor was too inebriated to attend her. Her seventh child, Gordon, lived for only 19 days. Her second daughter, Dorothy, and sixth son, Malcolm, both suffered from the same rare genetic degenerative neuromuscular disease, through which they lost the use of their legs and became permanent invalids during childhood. Dorothy, who had a more aggressive form of the disease, which caused severe scoliosis, died at 16. As well as the deaths of three of her children, Annie lived with the humiliation of her parents' separation and the knowledge that she had to be married because she was pregnant. She had also experienced separation herself during the eight years her husband was away working in Warracknabeal.

Annie was called 'Nina' (rhymes with 'miner') by the grandchildren who knew her. It was a name bestowed by her two oldest grandchildren, May and Jean Howie, Norm's daughters. Their mother, my Aunty Glad, was born into the German community at Murtoa in the Wimmera district of north-western Victoria. Apparently, the name was from her Silesian German dialect, and was an affectionate term for a grandmother. Annie had 15 grandchildren, but only the first eight knew her. She died when my sister Ruth was only three months old; and the rest of us were born over the next 13 years.

Annie died from pneumonia in the Creswick Hospital early on 16 July 1935. She was also suffering from 'heart weakness'. Except for Reg, who was in London, her other surviving children — Charl, Norm, Bill, Malc and Mavis — were with her when she died.

Annie's heavy burden of child-rearing probably contributed to her deteriorating health. She had given birth to nine children in 20 years, the first at 19; and so for the first half of her marriage she had been pregnant for almost seven years. The toll of all those pregnancies can be seen in her surviving photographs. She changed from fresh-faced, winsome teenager to careworn old woman by the time she was 40.

A few days after Annie's death, as the family were disposing of her effects, they found a letter she had written them, knowing they would soon find it. She had clearly been aware that she didn't have long to live. It was her 'message from the grave'. She expressed her regrets at having left them so soon and apologised for her shortcomings as a wife and mother. In a special note to her husband, she asked him to take care of 'Girlie' — Mavis — now married and herself a mother.

Annie's death had the greatest effect on Malc, the last of her sons, the invalid who had depended on her heavily. They had a close mother-son bond. With her death, he sank into deep depression. He'd been renowned for his wit and mischievous sense of humour, but he now withdrew into himself and lost all interest in life. As Mum later observed, his previous 'sparkle' vanished. He died only five months after his mother, on 21 January 1936. He had been staying with Mum and Dad at Cockatoo, then moved on to Frankston to spend some time with Norm and his family, who were holidaying there. His death in Frankston must have dampened the holiday for Norm and Co.

A little of my Uncle Malc survives in me. Apart from several of his paintings that decorate our house here in Wanniassa, I was given his middle name, Ian, as my first. Mum and Dad, who were both close to Malc, would have called me Malcolm, but that name was

already taken. In 1932 it had been given to Uncle Reg's older son, Jim Howie (1932–2020), as his middle name. Wishing to avoid duplication, my parents called me Ian instead. I'm glad they did, because I've always liked the name, and feel very comfortable being an 'Ian'. It is of course the Scottish version of John, which derives from the ancient Hebrew 'Yehohanan', meaning 'Yahweh [God] has been gracious'. As a Christian, a Methodist at heart, that's what I believe; and so my name was well chosen.

Looking back on my forebears

I met only two of the 12 forebears described above. As seen, they were a varied mix of Cornish, Scottish and English immigrants and the Australian-born children of those immigrants. In their homelands they were from mining, artisan and yeoman farming stock. In centuries past some of their own forebears had been of the gentry, but by the 18th century their families had come down in the world.

I've little idea what sort of people most of them were because all I can go on is snatches of part-remembered family lore passed down by my parents and various aunts and uncles.

Australia presented the immigrants with opportunities that wouldn't have been theirs in their homelands. Through applying themselves to making good, they prospered. By the time of the second Australian-born generation they had risen into the 'respectable' middle classes; and the brighter ones were receiving university education and entering the professions.

Looking back over the 22 pages I've just written, I'm struck by what complicated episodes human lives are. No human life is ever simple, but comprises its own variegated series of events, experiences, undertakings and relationships. The 12 forebears whose lives I've outlined all had their own unique individuality. They were all very different people from different countries in different eras, and their lives spanned 135 years from 1824 to 1959.

Most of the forebears didn't know most of the others. What unites them all is that they were the forebears of Jim and Mavis Willis's five children — me and my four siblings — and were therefore the ancestors of our children, grandchildren and recently, several months ago, the first of the great-grandchildren of my generation —Andres [pronounced 'on-dray'] Zeke McDowell, my brother David's great-grandson. Andres has Papua New Guinean and Aboriginal ancestry as well as our suite of Cornish-English-Scottish genes.

Something of the ancestral legacy obviously lives on in us five Willis siblings and in our children. We look the way we do because of the genes the forebears bequeathed us. We joke about our 'Willis legs', which resemble our Grandma Willis's. The 'firm' Willis jawline is evident in the photos of our paternal Cornish great-grandmother, Emily Giles/James. The 'lazy' left eye that sometimes doesn't quite align with the right eye in some photos of some of us, can also be seen in our Grandpa Howie's photos. The very curly hair that some of us have seems to have been bequeathed to us from our Cornish forebears. And the 'Howie face' that many of us wear is really the 'Pringle face', and perhaps the 'Melrose face', because our Scottish great-grandmother Margaret Pringle/Howie had it too.

Some of our health problems also seem to have been inherited. Fortunately none of the Charlie and Annie Howie's descendants have suffered the spinal muscular atrophy that afflicted their children Dorothy and Malcolm; however, a predisposition to prostate cancer seems to have travelled down the Howie-Harris lineage, via the female line as well as the male. Other intergenerational maladies have been asthma and diabetes, which claimed the lives of several of the James-Giles clan.

Perhaps some of our behaviours are heritable too. But apart from saying that many of Dad's descendants are diligent like he was, that's a speculative path I won't follow.

All of which draws me to the conclusion that there's no escaping the forebears. And that's a good reason for knowing who they were, and for knowing more about them.

3. MARGARET'S ANCESTRY

Margaret's ancestry is as relevant to this story as my own. That's because ours is a story in which two lineages have linked and become intertwined. By marrying each other, we each became a part of the other's family history. Margaret's parents were as dear to me as my own; and their forebears are also our children's and grandchildren's. As these memoirs have been produced mainly for our three children, our six surviving grandchildren and our extended family, they need to know which people populate Margaret's family tree. This chapter provides a summary.

The following two tables summarise Margaret's ancestry back through three generations to her eight great-grandparents. As in the previous chapter, 'Forebears', this chapter goes on to tell readers briefly what we know about the 14 people named in the table before Margaret and her three siblings. Of necessity, what follows will also refer to some of the people in the generations before Margaret's great-grandparents. Through reading the sections that now follow, my readers will hopefully appreciate something of the diversity of our family's antecedents.

Four-generation family tree: from the eight great-grandparents to the four Vale siblings

Great-grandparents	Grandparents	Parents	Siblings
William Henry Vale III (1845-1910)			
	William Henry Vale IV (1875-1947)		
Annie Maria Taylor (1856-1943, Mrs Bell)			
		William Henry Vale V (1912-1986)	
John Robert Grenness (b. 1836 as Field)			
	Emma Elizabeth Grenness (1874-1972)		
Martha Payne (1853-1912)			
			Penelope Jane Vale (Mrs Roberts, b. 1939)
			Margaret Ann Vale (Mrs Willis, b. 1941)
			Susan Elizabeth Vale (Mrs Sherrard, b. 1943)
			William Henry ('Bill') Vale VI (b. 1951)
James MacNab (1824-1891)			
	William John MacNab (1876-1930)		
Mary MacDonald (1840-1912)			
		Flora Jessie MacNab (1915-1988)	
Donald William McNeil (1849-1928)			
	Flora Georgina Cameron Morrow McNeil (1887-1924)		
Margaret Louisa Arkell (1858-1926)			

My readers will also find the next table helpful. It shows who Margaret's sixteen great-great grandparents were, with their offspring (i.e. her great-grandparents). For convenience, the table is divided into two sections, one each for the paternal and the maternal forebears.

Sixteen great-great grandparents

PATERNAL GREAT-GREAT GRANDPARENTS		PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDPARENTS
William Henry Vale II (1811-1858), born in Marleybone, London; migrated to Tasmania 1834 then Melbourne 1843 Rosina ('Rose') Fanny Harney (1828-1898), born Creagh near Balinasloe, Ireland; migrated to Melbourne 1841	—	William Henry Vale III (1845-1910)
John Taylor (1826–1898), born London, a watch-maker; migrated to Melbourne with his family 1852 Sarah Margaret Fowle (1825–1912), born Maidstone, Kent; migrated to Melbourne with her husband and children 1852	—	Annie Maria Taylor (1856-1943, Mrs Vale and later Mrs Bell)
George R. Field (1810–date of death unknown), birthplace unknown; migrated to Perth via Singapore 1833 Ann Elizabeth Broughton (1816–date of death unknown), born Staffordshire; migrated to Perth with her parents and children 1830	—	John Robert Field (adopted surname Grenness, born 1836, date of death unknown)
Martin Payne (1805–1873), born Harlington, Bedfordshire; arrived in South Australia with his wife and children 1854 Mary Odell (1808–1888), born Pulloxhill, Bedfordshire; arrived in South Australia with her husband and children 1854	—	Martha Payne (1853-1912, Mrs Grenness)
MATERNAL GREAT-GREAT GRANDPARENTS		**MATERNAL GREAT-GRANDPARENTS**
Alexander MacNab (1781-1862), born Bowmore, Islay Florence Currie (1781-1860), born Kilarrow, Islay	—	James MacNab (1824-1891)
Ewen McDonald (1804-1858), born Boleskine, Inverness-shire; migrated to Melbourne with his wife and children 1837 Isabella McBain (1808-1888), born Kingussie, Inverness-shire; migrated to Melbourne with her husband and children 1837	—	Mary/Maria McDonald (1840-1912, Mrs MacNab)
Norman McNeil (1816-1873), born Drynoch, Skye; migrated to Melbourne with his wife and son 1852 Marion McDonald (1821-1898); born Dunvegan, Skye, migrated to Melbourne with her husband and son 1852	—	Donald William McNeil (1849-1928)
Frederick George Arkell (1825-1920), born Stepney, London; transported to Melbourne, 1847 Flora Cameron (1825-1884), born Kilmonivaig, Inverness-shire; migrated to Melbourne, 1848	—	Margaret Louisa Arkell (1858-1926, Mrs NcNeil)

All the 16 great-great grandparents summarised above will be discussed further in the section that now follows.

Great-grandparents (and their parents)

Five of Margaret's eight great-grandparents were the Australian-born children of immigrants from the UK. Of the other three, two were born in Scotland and one in England. Margaret's ancestry is accordingly a mix of English, Scottish and Irish, with the proportions being roughly half English, seven-sixteenths Scottish and one-sixteenth Irish.

1. William Henry Vale III (1845-1910)

William Henry Vale III (1845-1910) was born in Geelong, the oldest of nine children of London-born William Henry Vale II (1811–1858) and his Irish wife Rosina (commonly called 'Rose') Fanny (née Harney, 1828–1898). The reason for numbering him 'III' is that, beginning with his grandfather and continuing through to his great-grandson, the firstborn males in successive Vale families were all called William Henry. Thus, my father-in-law, Margaret's father, William Henry ('Bill') Vale V (1912–1986), was the fifth to have the name; and my brother-in-law, Margaret's only brother, William Henry ('Bill') Vale VI, was the sixth, (William Henry Vale VI is also the last because his two sons were given other names — Kieran and Antony.)

a) The marriage of W.H. Vale II and Rosina Harney

Before discussing W.H. Vale III's life, I must digress for several pages to consider the 14-year marriage of his parents, William Henry II and Rosina Fanny Harney. I do so because it looms large in Vale family history.

I will also acknowledge two important sources of 'Valeana'. The first is an unpublished book produced by Gillian Thompson of Gladesville, NSW, in 2002. Like me, Gillian married into the Vale family. (Her husband's mother, Dorothy Thomson (née Vale) was a granddaughter of Lawrence McKeever Vale (1854–1939), the seventh of the nine children of W.H. Vale II and Rose Harney.) Gillian researched Vale family history assiduously. Her book, *The Steiglitz Tragedy: The Story of William Henry Vale and Family*, is a major source for anyone interested in that subject. The second is a compendium of documents titled simply *Vale* and compiled by Richard Thorley in 1985. Richard is a son of Dorothy Mary Thorley (née Vale), a granddaughter of Francis John Vale (1846–1911), the second child of William II and Rose. The family trees and collection of birth-death-marriage certificates in Richard's compendium are an essential source for anyone pursuing Vale family history. I acknowledge my gratitude to both Gillian and Richard for making their books available to me, and for sharing much 'Valeana' with me.

W.H. Vale II was born in Marleybone, London, on 8 October 1811. He was baptised in the ancient church of St Mary in Marleybone. On his father's side the family was from Norwich in Norfolk, where they'd been for several generations after moving north from Bocking in Essex. He received his schooling at the famous Merchant Taylors' School. (In Suffolk Lane near the north bank of the Thames about 800 metres south-east of St Paul's Cathedral, it was one of Britain's oldest schools. Founded in 1561 by the Merchant Taylors' Company, it moved to the Charterhouse north of St Paul's during the 1840s and then to Hertfordshire in the late 1920s.)

After leaving school, William II was apprenticed to a firm of ironmongers, Ruppin & Burton, in Great Windmill and Oxford Streets in Soho. In 1834, aged 23 and his apprenticeship probably completed, he sailed for Tasmania from Liverpool aboard the *Lady East*. In Tasmania he worked as a cordwainer (i.e. a shoemaker) for nine years. In 1843 he moved to Melbourne, where he is said to have run a cobbler's business, the 'Golden Boot', in

Collins Street. Later in 1843 he relocated to Geelong, where he again ran a shoemaking business. The business prospered.

William II and Rose Harney married in the Presbyterian Church in Geelong on 1 July 1844. They seem to have met in Geelong. He was Anglican and she Catholic, so perhaps a Presbyterian marriage meant a wedding on 'neutral' territory. She was only 16; at 32 he was twice her age.

Rose, who was born in 1828, possibly in January, was from Creagh, a small village about 1.25 kilometres north-east of Ballinasloe, roughly in the geographical centre of Ireland. (It's between Galway in the west and Dublin in the east.) Her father was Michael Harney, a miller, and her mother was Rose née Crosby. She had arrived in Melbourne aboard the barque *Middlesex* on 1 October 1841. Only 13, she came as a bounty immigrant, i.e. as a government-assisted passenger. What she did in the 2 years and 9 months before her marriage is unknown.

Rose and William had nine children between 1845 and 1858: William Henry III (born 1845), Francis John (Frank, 1846), Ellen Jane (1848), Charles Michael (1850), Rosabelle Mary (Rosie, 1852), Albert (1853), Lawrence McKeever (1854), George (1855) and Eva (1858). All were baptised as Catholics. Two died in infancy: Albert (at 6 months) and Eva (at 3 months).

Only one photography of William Henry II survives. It depicts a handsome young man, perhaps in his 30s, wearing a dark suit, waistcoat, white shirt and large bow-tie. He has a full head of long, dark hair, a clipped moustache, and a beard fringing his jawline. No known image of Rose has survived.

b) A return to the UK

At some time after baby Albert's death in December 1853, early 1854, the family travelled to the UK. The shoemaking business, which had made good returns, was closed. Before departing Geelong, William II wrote a will which was signed and witnessed on 18 January 1854. The will provided for annuities to be paid to his mother in London and Rose's father in Ballinasloe. It left his estate to Rose and then, in the case of her demise, to his children and eventual grandchildren. It also appointed three executors, James Noble, David Forsyth Main and Rose herself, to be the trustees of his estate.

The family lived in London for almost two years, in the Carlton Road Villas in Grafton Road, Kentish Town, about 6 kilometres north-west of the city centre. During that time they visited Rose's birthplace near Ballinasloe more than once. They also visited William's mother and two sisters, Elizabeth Anne (born 1814, Mrs Phillips) and E.L. (born 1816, Mrs Storey; only her initials are known, but they possibly stood for Ellen Louisa). His mother, Anne (maiden name unknown), had remarried a chap called Hazeldine and was living in Sloane Street, Chelsea. The sisters, both married, were living in the Craven Buildings in Drury Lane in central London.

Family tradition has it that, while in London, William III and possibly Frank were enrolled in their father's old school, the Merchant Taylors' School. They would have been aged 8 and 7 and therefore old enough for school. Lawrence, the seventh child, was born in London in June 1854. By the end of 1855 they were back in Geelong because George was born there in December that year.

c) To Steiglitz

From Geelong the family moved to Steiglitz, in the Brisbane Ranges 34 kilometres north-west of Geelong. Gold had been discovered there in 1854; a rush ensued; a town quickly

sprang up; and the Vales moved there, perhaps in mid-1856, to open the town's first pub — Vale's Hotel.

William became a publican on the advice of Geelong friends who were in the hotel-keeping trade. He bought land there and had the hotel built.

Vale's Hotel was a two-storey weatherboard building with a long veranda at the front. It was among the town's first permanent structures. It also served as a temporary courthouse until one was built in 1858.

On a visit to Steiglitz some 31 years ago, I attended the unveiling of a plaque with about 45 other Vale descendants. (Gillian Thompson and Richard Thorley also attended this event.) The plaque, in memory of W.H. Vale II, was placed on the site of Vale's Hotel. The hotel itself had vanished long, long ago. It was demolished during the late 1880s–early 90s.

d) An unravelling

During the last months of their Steiglitz years, early 1858, William's and Rose's family life unravelled spectacularly. The youngest child, Eva, had died. William and Rose quarrelled often and on several occasions were seen belabouring each other. William had become an alcoholic and was suffering from epilepsy and delirium tremens. Rose began an affair with a German chap called Fred Turner, who lived in a tent opposite the hotel, where Rose spent time with him. William blamed his alcoholism on his wife's dalliance with Turner.

The family ructions climaxed in late February 1858. William had been on a week-long drinking binge when on the night of 27th February he drunkenly picked a fight with Turner in the hotel bar. He swung the first punch and the enraged Turner struck back. Badly knocked about and bleeding from the head, William was put to bed by bystanders who tried to protect him from Turner's onslaught. He remained in an alcoholic stupor for the next nine days until his death on 7th March. Meanwhile, a hotel guest had seen Rose beating him with her fists on several occasions and shouting that he'd be better off dead. The same guest had also seen her cavorting in the bar with Turner.

The local general practitioner, Dr W.P. Geoghagan, conducted a diabolically horrendous, messy autopsy. He used a claw-hammer to smash open William's skull, leaving more than 40 bone fragments on the floor beneath the table where he'd worked. He found that William had died from a combination of epilepsy and delirium tremens rather from any injuries suffered in the fight with Turner. William was then buried in an unnumbered grave in an unrecorded section of the Steiglitz cemetery.

e) The inquiries

A coroner's inquest was conducted before a jury in Steiglitz — in Vale's Hotel! — the next evening, 8th March. The Geelong district coroner, Dr Foster Shaw MD, presided. Nine witnesses were called to give evidence, the last of them Dr Geoghagan. In delivering its verdict, the jury agreed with Dr Geoghagan on the cause of death. The jurors also attached to their verdict a statement saying that *'a case of more deep depravity and utter heartlessness never came under their notice than the evidence they have heard'*. They concluded by observing that they *'regret it is not within the powers of the law to punish the profligate wife of the deceased and her vagabond paramour'*.

The inquest attracted widespread interest in the press of the day. The Geelong *Advertiser*, Ballarat *Star* and Melbourne *Argus* reported it at length. That was not the end of the matter, however. A week later a police magistrate, James M. Clow, inquired into the circumstances of the autopsy Dr Geohagan had conducted and the manner of William II's funeral. The inquiry was at the request of the jurors at the inquest. The magistrate heard

evidence from the police who had meanwhile investigated the matter. The details they revealed are too gory and distressing to mention here; however, the magistrate, finding that 'Dr Geoghagan may not have been as careful as he might have been', referred the matter back to the coroner, Dr Shaw. Dr Shaw replied to the magistrate in a letter saying that Dr Geoghagan's opening of a skull by smashing it with a hammer was not an unusual practice and that some doctors preferred that to sawing the top from the skull. The Geelong *Advertiser* reported all this, stirring up a flurry of indignant correspondence from readers.

Soon after these events Rose and Turner fled Steiglitz, leaving behind the six children in the care of the local schoolmaster. The family's affairs were back in the newspapers again three months later, in June 1858, after the schoolmaster raised the matter of the children's future with the magistrate. The magistrate declared them to be deserted children and referred their case to the court in Geelong. The court placed them temporarily in the care of a Geelong carpenter, Rowland Dossett. The Catholic Orphanage in Geelong offered to take the children.

Meanwhile, Rose had been located in Heathcote north of Melbourne and remanded to Geelong. Charged with deserting her children, she faced the court in Geelong on 1 July. She denied deserting them, saying she had left them in the schoolmaster's care for an agreed period, which hadn't yet ended. The court accepted this explanation and discharged her. In a further court hearing about ten days later she faced another charge, of not having registered the death of her last child, Eva. She pleaded that she had been unaware of her obligation to register the death; further, because her husband had still been alive at the time that would have been his responsibility. The case was dismissed.

The court also delegated the task of 'disposing' of the children to George Wright and James Noble, the Vale estate executors. Rose, an earlier executor, was excluded from this duty. For a time Messrs Wright and Noble continued running the hotel, but by July 1858 they had sold it for £70 (equivalent to $7143 in 2023). The funds were to be used for the children's support. In the end the children were entrusted to the executors' care. The executors either reared them themselves or — as family tradition maintains — placed them with foster families.

Forty years ago during a visit to Steiglitz with Margaret and our children, we walked the local cemetery in hope of finding William II's grave. We couldn't see it, but as we now know it had remained unmarked.

f) Mr and Mrs Thirloway

Rose had meanwhile left Turner. Later in 1858 she seems to have begun consorting with a chap called William Kellett Thirloway (1836–1925), a miner and later mine manager. Eight years her junior, he was from Durham in northern England. According to one source, Gillian Thompson, they married in Kilmore (north of Melbourne) on 17 June 1859. A search of the online Victorian register of marriages cannot confirm this. According to the register, no Vales, Thirloways or Harneys were married in Victoria late 1850s–early 1860s; so we must assume that theirs was a 'common law' marriage. Be that as it may, Rose's widowhood was brief. She was plainly no slouch in acquiring new partners. Whatever the nature of the marriage, henceforth she used the surname Thirloway.

After taking up with W.K. Thirloway, Rose effectively abandoned her Vale children for the second time. The older ones were cared for by their foster parents; the younger ones were placed in an orphanage for a time. What contact their mother had with them is unknown, but she soon had other children to worry about.

Rose and Thirloway produced four children of their own. First was William Coulson, born at Reedy Creek, east of Kilmore in 1860, but registered under the name Thomas Edward. A miner, he married a Janet Peart at Bromley near Dunolly in central Victoria in

1886. They and their three children and moved to Mount Magnet, inland from Geraldton in Western Australia, where he took out a mining lease. They later moved to Kalgoorile, where he died in 1916 at age 56. Second was Hannah Rose, who was born in Bright in 1862, but died aged 1 the next year. Third was Robert Thomas, who was born in Wandiligong in 1864, became a miner, never married, and died in the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum in Cheltenham in 1939. Fourth and finally was Rose Fanny, who was born in Yackandandah in 1866. She married a Luke Smith, possibly a miner, in Sydney in 1890. They had four children, all born in Emmaville, a mining town near Glen Innes in far northern New South Wales.

What the Vale children knew of these younger half-siblings is unknown. The older five Vale children, William III, Frank, Ellen, Charles and Rosie, all moved to the Bright-Beechworth area, married and settled there. They would have had contact with their mother and her second husband; and so they eventually must have known the children of her second family as well.

Rose disappeared from public view after 1858–1859. She re-entered the historical records in 1866, when she and Thirloway began advertising widely in the Melbourne *Age*, *Argus* and *Herald* newspapers for 'Mr William Henry Vale to get in touch [with them] to hear something to his advantage'. At that stage they were living at Twist's Creek, a mining settlement about four kilometres west of Yackandandah in north-east Victoria. William III must have responded to the advertising blitz because by the end of the year, he, too, is living in Twist's Creek (more of which later).

g) Making good

Despite the horrendous events surrounding their father's death, their mother's departure from Steiglitz, and their fostering out to other families, the seven surviving children of William II and Rose all made good in life. William III became a mining engineer, married Annie Marie Taylor of the Woolshed near Beechworth, and had nine children. Frank (1846–1911) became a schoolteacher, married Lizzie Gower Hill of Stanley near Beechworth, and had 10 children. Ellen (1848–1932) married Abel Goldsworthy, a miner from Devon in England, and had four children. Charles (1850–1919) became a mine manager, married Mary Elizabeth Taylor (a sister of Annie, William III's wife), and had 12 children. Rosie (1852–1929) married Francis Rowe; they had no children of their own but adopted a son who was called George Francis Vale. Lawrence (1854–1939) became a baker, moved to Cooma in New South Wales, married Emily Jane Scanes of Sydney, and had eight children. George (year of death uncertain) also became a baker, joined Lawrence in Cooma, married Ellen Dawson, and had one son.

An interesting aside here is that two of the Vale boys became mining engineers and two bakers. That was because they entered the trades of the foster families that had raised them. William III and Charles were brought up by a mining engineer, while a baker raised Lawrence and George.

Although their marriage ended disastrously, William II and Rose established a large clan of seven surviving children, 45 grandchildren, at least 62 great-grandchildren, probably well over a hundred great-great-grandchildren, and an unknown but certainly large number of descendants in the fifth, sixth and subsequent generations.

h) A belated family memorial

We had more luck finding Rose's grave than earlier with W.H. Vale II's. By the time of her death at 70, Rose had achieved respectability. She had settled at Wandiligong (formerly

called Growler's Creek) near Bright (formerly Morse's Creek) in the Ovens valley of north-eastern Victoria. Her husband was a mine manager, always a member of the local elite in goldfields towns. Wandiligong was also where her oldest son, William III, and his large family were living. She was buried in the Bright Cemetery. The local newspaper published a laudatory obituary.

When I contacted the cemetery trust inquiring about her grave's location, the secretary obligingly provided the details. On our next visit to Beechworth (from our holiday home in Tawonga, 36 kilometres north-east of Bright) we located it.

The grave was unmarked, so in 2004 we arranged for a bronze memorial plaque to be installed there. At last, 106 years after her death and despite her failings as a mother, Rose had been honoured by her Vale descendants. The plaque reads as follows:

> ROSE THIRLOWAY (1828 – 98)
> NÉE ROSINA HARNEY, BALLINASLOE, IRELAND
> ARRIVED GEELONG 1844 AND M. (1) WILLIAM
> HENRY VALE, BY WHOM SHE HAD 9 CHILDREN.
> WHEN HE DIED SHE M. 1859 WILLIAM
> THIRLOWAY, BY WHOM SHE HAD 4 CHILDREN.
> THIS TRIBUTE IS BY PENELOPE, MARGARET,
> SUSAN (NÉE VALE) & WILLIAM VALE VI,
> FOUR OF HER MANY DESCENDANTS.

We got only two details wrong. At that stage we didn't know that Rose had arrived in Victoria in 1841, not 1844; and we weren't aware that she had never formally married W.K. Thirloway. As for Thirloway himself, in 1909, nine years after Rose's death, he married a woman called Emily Jane Wicker. He was 73. They later moved to Western Australia, where he died in Kalgoorlie in 1925 at the age of 88.

i) An affiliation case

The foregoing paragraphs have been necessary to place William Henry Vale III in historical context. As seen, he was born in Geelong on 21 March 1845. He was a fortnight short of his 13th birthday when his father died in March 1858.

Apart from the family tradition that he attended the Merchant Taylors' School during the family's sojourn in London, we know little about his education. He must have attended schools in Geelong before and after his time in London; and he attended the Steiglitz school. He seems to have left school already at the time of his father's death, so perhaps he'd already begun working in the local mines. We do know that, as seen, he became a mining engineer, perhaps because the chap he was fostered to in Steiglitz was a mining engineer.

Nothing more is heard of William III until 1867, by which time he would have been 22. As seen, in 1866 his mother advertised widely in the Melbourne newspapers to locate him. He must have responded to the advertisements because from late 1866 until at least October 1867 he was living in Twist's Creek with his mother and stepfather. In October 1867 he was involved in legal proceedings, an 'affiliation' case, i.e. a paternity suit, in which a 19-year-old local shopkeeper, Mary Elizabeth Rhodes (c. 1848–1911), sought a ruling that he was the father of the baby boy she had given birth to in August that year. Significantly, she had named the baby William Henry Vale Rhodes.

The court hearing took place in Yackandandah on Friday 11 October 1867. The *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* in nearby Beechworth reported the proceedings at length. William III did not appear but was represented by his barrister, Mr William Lawrence Zincke of Beechworth. The courtroom was crowded because the case had attracted widespread interest.

During her cross-examination, Mary Rhodes told the court that she had been introduced to 'Billy' Vale by his mother (Rose) about a year earlier. She had also become a close friend of his sister Ellen, who was also living with her mother and stepfather as a member of the Thirloway household. She claimed that she and 'Billy' had effectively been cohabiting and that he had promised to marry her. He abandoned her, however, when she became pregnant.

During her evidence Mary admitted to having given birth to an earlier baby in 1865, when she was 16. Despite that, she argued, she was a young woman of good repute. She said her main reason for initiating the affiliation suit was financial. She was poor and so were her parents, who couldn't afford to keep supporting her and the baby. She needed William III to contribute to her baby's upkeep.

The bench, comprising the local magistrate and a justice of the peace, found in Mary's favour. William III was ordered to pay maintenance of 12 shillings and 6 pence a week until the child was two. In present values that would be about $185.

Mary soon put her jilting by 'Billy' Vale behind her. Within six months she had married a 27-year-old chap called Charles Albert Wilson (1841–1905) in the Yackandandah Methodist Church. That was in March 1868. They went on to have 10 children together.

What became of William Henry Vale Rhodes is unknown. Much as I'd like to know more about him, I lack the time and resources to go searching for him. If he eventually married and had children, and they, too, had children, the chances are that Margaret and her siblings could have Rhodes cousins they've never heard of.

My daughter Rosie researched this matter four years ago. She concluded that William Henry Vale III 'appears to have been a rotter, like his mother'.

j) W.H. Vale III's marriage

However we might judge William III's abandonment of Mary Rhodes, he later settled down, married, produced a large family and acquired respectability. He was living in Morse's Creek (Bright) when on 12 June 1874 at Growler's Creek (Wandiligong) he married Annie Maria Taylor. He was 29 and she was 17.

William III and Annie settled in Wandiligong, where they lived for the next 20 years. In that time they produced a family of eight children: William Henry IV (born 1875), Charles (1877), George (1879), Harold Edward (1881), Robert Kellett (1883), Frederick William (1886), Frank Septimus (1888) and Annie Adele (1891). The house they lived in is still standing; and we've visited it on several occasions.

At some point after their marriage, about 1875–1876, William III spent 18 months managing the Kamala nickel mine on New Caledonia. Presumably he left Annie in Wandiligong with her infant firstborn during that time.

When their family was off their hands, William III and Annie moved to Bright. They later moved to Canterbury in Melbourne, to a house called 'Bogong' in Hopetoun Avenue. Ten kilometres east of the Melbourne city centre, Canterbury was still semi-rural, but with its leafy streets was already a prestigious residential area. These days, Hopetoun Avenue is within Canterbury's 'golden mile' of opulent homes. Like most of the original houses in the street, 'Bogong' has probably been demolished and replaced. Unfortunately, the street number is unknown.

William III died in 'Bogong' on 21 September 1910 at age 65. The cause of death was phthisis, which could have been tuberculosis or silicosis or both. 'Miner's phthisis', a wasting lung disease, was an occupational hazard for miners; and William III had been in the mining industry for 52 years. He was buried in the Box Hill Cemetery in a grave where Annie was later buried too.

The *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* in Beechworth ran a short article about William III three days after his death. It said 'he took a prominent part in all local matters', was 'an enthusiastic horticulturalist and floriculturalist', and was 'one of the foundrs of the Wandiligong Agricultural and Horticultural Society'.

Two images of William III survive. The first is charcoal sketch of him in his early 20s, showing him as a fresh-faced but luxuriously bearded young chap. The second is a family portrait showing him with Annie and six of their eight children. It was probably taken in the early 1900s, perhaps about 1905, when he would have been 60. Absent from the photograph is the oldest, William Henry IV, who had already married, and the fifth child, George, who had died of pneumonia at age 17 in January 1897. William III looks older than his age at the time. He has grey hair turning white and a large drooping white moustache; and he appears shrunken and stooped. Perhaps his illness had already begun exacting its toll.

2. Annie Maria Taylor (1856–1943)

As seen, Annie Maria Taylor (1856–1943) was the wife of William Henry Vale III. She was born on 12 June 1874 at Lower Woolshed (near Beechworth) to English immigrant parents. They were London-born John Taylor (1826–1898), a watchmaker, and his wife Sarah Margaret (née Fowle, 1825–1912). Sarah had been born on 11 December 1825 in Maidstone, Kent, the daughter of a George Fowle, a farmer. (In some sources Sarah's maiden name is wrongly given as 'Fowler'.)

John and Sarah had married in London 1851 before migrating to Australia in 1852. They eventually had nine children, of whom Annie was the third. The fourth was Mary Elizabeth, three years younger than Annie (born 1860), who married Charles Michael Vale, one of W.H. Vale III's younger brothers.

Little is now known of John Taylor, but Sarah's death certificate tells us something of her life and death. She died of bronchial pneumonia in Harrietville near Bright on 6 September 1912. Aged 87, she was living as a pensioner. Seven of her nine children were still living. She was buried in the Harrietville cemetery with Anglican rites. In 2000 Margaret and I visited the cemetery to try to locate her grave, but it is unmarked.

Annie's given names were Anna Maria, but except in her birth and death certificates she was always known as Annie. Little is known of her childhood and youth. She enters the Vale story when on 12 June 1874 at age 17 she married W.H. Vale III at the hotel run by Mr J.W. Roberts in Growler's Creek (known as Wandiligong from 1875). They were married by the Rev. Samuel Bealey Holt of the United Church of England and Ireland (i.e. Anglican) in Bright, who later served as the Bishop of the Riverina in New South Wales. At the time William III was living in Growler's Creek and Annie in Morse's Creek (Bright).

As seen, she and William III produced eight children over a 16-year period, i.e. a baby every two years. That means she spent six years out of 16 being pregnant.

After a 15-year widowhood, Annie remarried in either Echuca or Castlemaine in 1925. (The sources differ on which town.) She was 69. Her second husband was William Calderwood Bell. We know little about him other than his name and that he predeceased her. (We could discover more if we went to the trouble and expense of obtaining his birth, marriage and death certificates.) She died at age 86 in the 'Keith House' private hospital, East St Kilda, on 26 May 1943, 16 days before her 87th birthday. The cause of death was heart disease and atherosclerosis. She was buried the next day in the same grave as her first husband (W.H. Vale III) in the Box Hill Cemetery.

Four photographs of Annie have survived. One shows her as a young woman; another shows her as a youngish-looking middle-aged woman, with two young men, perhaps sons; the third is the family portrait from about 1905 mentioned above; and the last shows her in

1941 holding her newly born great-granddaughter, Margaret Ann Vale, with Margaret's older sister Penelope leaning against her knee.

3. The Grenness family antecedents

In writing about the Grenness family, I acknowledge my debt to John F. Waghorn, a Grenness descendant who in 1986 published a book called *The Grenness Family in Australia: Being the story of John Robert Grenness and his wife Martha (née Payne) with a list of their descendants*. John undertook such painstaking and thorough research that he relieved others interested in Grenness family history of much of the heavy burden that would otherwise have fallen upon them. In some very minor details I'll disagree with John, but that's because I'm writing almost 40 years later and have access to more recent information that mightn't have ben available to him.

The Grenness story begins with the arrival in present-day Perth in the Swan River colony (now Western Australia) of the ship *Hooghly* on 13 February 1830. Among the 173 passengers were Joseph Broughton (1795–1867) and his wife Jane Ann (née Burrows, 1794–1876) and their six children. (A seventh was born in Western Australia.) Joseph, a carpenter, was from Lancashire, his father and grandfather having been from Bolton. Jane was from Staffordshire. They had probably married about 1812 and their children seem to have been born in Staffordshire. Joseph later purchased an allotment of land at Fremantle. At first he was employed on roadworks around Perth. By 1837 he was in Albany and by the 1860s he was running a boarding house there. He and Ann lived in Western Australia for the rest of their lives. He died in Rockingham, 46 kilometres south-west of Perth, in 1867, reputedly the first person buried in the East Rockingham cemetery there. Jane died nine years later.

Ann Elizabeth Broughton (born 1816) was the second child of the family and the only daughter. In Perth on 25 November 1833 at the age of 17 she married a recent immigrant, 23-year-old George R. Field. George, a sawyer, had arrived in Perth on 5 April that year. He came aboard the ship *Aranzau* (or *Aranzan*) from Singapore. They had two children, Jane Ann (born 1834) and John Robert (born 25 April 1836) and lived in Fremantle. George worked locally for merchants called Wright and Lang, who in November 1835 sent him to Sydney aboard the ship *Currency Lass* on their business. His son, John Robert Field, was born some five months after his departure. Meanwhile, Ann and her two children continued living in Fremantle.

That is the last we hear of George R. Field. He simply disappears from the record. He must have died because some eight years later, on 24 January 1844, Ann married a man called James Grenness in Perth. She described herself as a widow; he called himself a yeoman (possibly meaning a small farmer). Neither could sign their name in the marriage register. He was about 38 (born about 1806) and she was 28.

James Grenness was a man of mystery. There is no record of him having immigrated into Western Australia; and he doesn't appear in the censuses. One supposition is that he was a Norwegian seaman who had jumped ship. (The surname is Norse and perhaps means 'green headland/cape/promontory' or 'branched headland'.) Whatever his origins, he, too, disappears from the scene, less than two years after his marriage to Ann. On 14 December 1845 Ann and her two children sailed from Perth for South Australia aboard the *Roseanna*. He does not seem to have accompanied them; however, by this stage his two stepchildren seem to have adopted his surname and were calling themselves Jane Ann and John Robert Grenness.

The subsequent career of John Robert Grenness (born Field) is described in the next section. As for his mother, Anne Grenness (formerly Field, née Broughton), she is another who simply disappears from the record after moving to South Australia. Her date and place of

death are unknown. More is known about her firstborn, Jane Ann. At the age 24 in January 1849 she married a chap called Charles William Henry Walters in Melbourne. Over the next 27 years she bore him ten children. She died at age 58 in Bendigo in May 1893.

4. John Robert Grenness (born Field, 1836; death date unknown)

When John Robert Grenness sailed from Perth to South Australia in December 1845, he was four months shy of his tenth birthday. We know little of his early life; and no known photos of him or his parents have survived. We don't know which school(s), if any, he had attended or how long he stayed there. He must have learnt to read and write, however, because he later signed his marriage certificate with a strong, fluent and legible signature. (Interestingly, he used the old-style 'long-s and short-s' 'double-ss' at the end of his name, like this: *Grenneſs*. To present-day eyes it looks like 'fs', and that was one reason it had fallen out of use by the mid-19th century.

JRG, as I'll refer to him from now on, re-enters the historical record on 13 July 1854. That was the day he married 17-year-old Martha Payne in St Mary's Anglican Church in Burra, South Australia. He gave his age as 21, but he was fibbing because he was not quite 18 years and 3 months. Perhaps he put his age up to avoid having parental consent. His stated occupation was carpenter. The presiding minister was the Rev. James Pollitt (1831–1881), the St Mary's vicar and earlier a missionary in Jamaica.

The address given by both bride and groom on the marriage certificate is a mystery. It was 'Kamato, Mount Remarkable' not Burra, where Martha's family had settled soon after arriving in South Australia from England in January 1854. 'Kamato' is a place that never seems to have existed in South Australia or anywhere else. Perhaps it was the name of a pastoral property; if so, its whereabouts are unknown. Mount Remarkable is a long way from Burra — 150 kilometres to the north-west.

JRG and Martha remained in Burra for about a year after their marriage. In 1855 they migrated to Victoria at the same time as her family, the Paynes. They all settled in Beechworth, a goldrush town. JRG and Martha's father, Martin Payne, worked as miners. By the mid-1860s, however, he had learnt shoemaking and henceforth made and repaired boots and shoes. About 1873, he, Martha and their children moved to Growler's Creek (Wandiligong), near Bright in the Ovens Valley, 67 kilometres south-east of Beechworth.

The reason for the move seems to have been that JRG, who had continued working part-time at gold fossicking, thought that the prospects around Wandiligong were better than at Beechworth. He spent much of his spare time prospecting. He often took his sons with him on these excursions.

JRG and Martha produced a family of 13 children. The first of them, George, was born in Beechworth in August 1855, but he survived for less than three months. The second, James, also born in Beechworth, in October 1856, died a fortnight before his first birthday. The next eight, two girls and six boys, all born in Beechworth, survived. In birth order they were: Sarah Jane (1859–1940; did not marry and was usually called Jane), Charles (1861–1933), Frederick (1862–1934), William John (1864–1942), Harry (1867–1952), Arthur Albert (1868–1948), Annie Letitia (1870–1902, later Mrs Clarke) and Bertie (1872–1969, who called himself Bert). The last three, a girl and two boys, were all born in Growler's Creek (Wandiligong): Emma Elizabeth (1874–1972, later Mrs Vale), Ernest (1876–1945, known as Ernie) and Francis Martin (1879–1896, usually called Frank).

As well as running his shoemaking business, JRG seems to have formed a series of partnerships to mine reefs along the Ovens Valley. In 1878–1879, 'Grenness & Co.' were working the Leamer Reef near Harrietville and extracting an ounce of gold for each ton of

stone crushed. In 1880 'Grenness & Mills' were working the Evening Star Reef near Wandiligong.

Meanwhile, the Grenness children were attending the local Wandiligong school. Three of them, Harry, Emma and Frank stayed on there as pupil teachers and eventually qualified as teachers. Charles and William learned their father's shoemaking trade. Bertie and Ernest began work as telegraph messengers at the Wandiligong Post Office. Arthur became a storekeeper at Tungamah, far away to the north-west beyond Wangaratta. Frederick became a grocer at Alphington, a north-eastern Melbourne suburb.

At some point during the late 1880s, probably late 1889, JRG disappeared from the historical record. According to family tradition, he sold the family home, which had been bought in 1877, quit Wandiligong and abandoned his wife and family. They were left to fend for themselves.

JRG seems to have fallen into debt because creditors were pursuing him. He plainly tried to solve his problems by running away from them, apparently successfully because neither the creditors nor his family ever heard from him again. Like his father, mother and stepfather earlier, he vanished without trace.

One of JRG's sons, Ernie, spent the rest of his life trying to find him. He never did, despite trips to Western Australia and South Australia to try to trace him. JRG possibly changed his name, moved interstate and adopted a new identity. If he'd done that in 1889, when 'Grenness & Mills' were still working the Evening Star Reef, he would have been 53. Almost a century later, John Waghorn failed to find him by using the conventional genealogical methods. I've also failed to find him in any of the state government registers of deaths under either of the names Grenness and Field. If he'd lived into his 90s, he'd have died during the 1920s, but not under those surnames.

Meanwhile, Martha held the family together. She put the younger children through school, supported them as they entered the world of work, and saw them marry and begin leading independent lives of their own. A staunch member of the Wandiligong Methodist Church, she ensured that her children were raised as church-attending Methodists. One of her saddest duties must have been to bury her youngest, Frank, a promising teacher, who died of scarlet fever in Beechworth in 1896. Eventually, about 1901, she and her unmarried daughter, Jane, quit Wandiligong to join her unmarried son, Ernie, in South Melbourne. He was a clerk with the recently established Commonwealth government's Postmaster-General's Department (nowadays Australia Post). They later moved to Moonee Ponds, where Martha died on 13 March 1912 at age 74. If JRG were still alive then, he'd have been almost 76. He would have known nothing of these events, however. His disappearing trick had entirely cut him off from the life of his large family.

4. Martha Payne (1837–1912)

Martha was born in Harlington, Bedfordshire, on 6 May 1837. She was the fourth of seven children and third of four daughters of William (known as 'Martin') Payne (1805–1873) and his wife Mary (1808–1888, née Odell). Martin was from Westoning and Mary from Pulloxhill, neighbouring villages near Harlington and about 20 kilometres south of Bedford, the county town. They were married in the Anglican church of St Mary the Virgin in Lower Sundon, near Harlington, on 8 February 1830.

Martha was 16 when the family emigrated to Adelaide aboard the *William Hammond* in late 1853. They arrived on 19 January 1854 and soon afterwards moved to Burra, a prosperous copper-mining town 164 kilometres north of Adelaide. Soon after settling in Burra, Martha must have met John Robert Grenness because, as seen, she married him there

on 13 July that year at age 17. As also seen, in 1855 the newlyweds and her family relocated to Beechworth, where her husband and father both worked as gold prospectors and miners.

Martin Payne later became the sexton at the Beechworth cemetery, a position he held until his death from rectal cancer on 11 February 1873 at age 68. He was buried in the cemetery he'd recently been managing and was succeeded as sexton by his second son, Charles. Mary, his widow, continued living in Beechworth until her death at age 80 on 28 October 1888. In an obituary for Mary, the *Beechworth and Ovens Advertiser* observed that she had been 'a kind and good mother'. Further, 'there are many persons in this district who will long remember her for her many acts of kindness and charity in times of need'.

We have seen how Martha gave birth to 13 children, either in Beechworth or Wandiligong. Unusually for those times, all of them survived, though, as seen, Frank died at 17. Another who died early was Annie Letitia (Mrs Clarke), whose death in St Kilda at age 32 was from peritonitis. Her death, on 18 December 1902, came only five days after she had given birth to her first child, a boy who lived for only ten days. Mother and baby were buried in the same grave in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

We have also seen how Martha kept her family together in the years following their abandonment by their paterfamilias. Her struggle must have been heroic!

After a prolonged period of ill-health, Martha died at home in Moonee Ponds on 17 March 1912 at age 74. She was buried the next day in the Melbourne General Cemetery. On 22 March the *Bright Alpine Observer* ran an obituary for Martha. Calling her 'a former well-known and highly respected resident of Wandiligong,' the obituary noted that she had been 'a kind and loving parent'. It went on to say that 'for many years [she] with her family took an active part in the affairs of Wandiligong, particularly the Methodist Church, of which she was a valued member'. There was of course no mention of the husband who had deserted her and their children.

Unfortunately no known photographs of either Martha or her husband have survived. And there are no known photos of any of their parents.

5. James MacNab (1824–1891)

Turning now to Margaret's maternal great-grandparents, I'll being by observing that whereas her paternal ancestry was seven-eighths English and one-eighth Irish, her maternal ancestry was seven-eighths Scottish and one-eighth English.

In writing about the MacNabs and later the McNeils, I must acknowledge the assistance I've received over many years from Margaret's first cousin, Cheryl Ham (née Middlin), the only daughter of Margaret's Aunt Leila Middlin (née MacNab). Cheryl is the MacNab-McNeil genealogist. My correspondence and conversations with her during the past 40 years have been a major source of information for me.

The first of the Scottish great-grandparents I'll discuss was James MacNab (1824–1891). His surname is spelt either 'MacNab' or 'McNab' depending on who was writing the name. He's 'MacNab' on his death certificate but 'McNab' in the online Victorian register of deaths. He's also 'MacNab' on his marriage certificate, but 'McNab' on the passenger list of the ship that brought him to Australia, and also 'McNab' in his obituary in the *Nagambie Times* newspaper. Elsewhere the name is both 'MacNabb' and 'McNabb'. Some of James's grandchildren wrote their name 'MacNab', others 'McNab'. For consistency and to avoid confusion, I'll use 'MacNab' throughout this chapter.

James was an agricultural labourer or 'farmer' from Islay, the southernmost of the Hebridean islands. His parents were Alexander MacNabb (1781–1862), a 'farmer'/agricultural labourer, and Florence (née Currie, also called Flora and Flory, 1781–1860). They lived at Kilarrow, an area on the southern outskirts of Bowmore, the main town

on Islay. James was the third of his parents' five children (three boys and two girls). He would have been born in April 1824 because he was baptised in the Kilarrow church on 1st May. He had an older brother and sister, William (born 1820) and Flora (1822), and a younger brother and sister, Duncan (1826) and Betty (1827).

Gaelic was most probably James's first language because at that time it was the dominant language of Islay. About three-quarters of the island population of 9000 spoke it. Even today, a century later when the population is only 3000, Gaelic is the first language for a quarter of the population.

James left Scotland for Australia aboard the barque *Birman* at the age of 28. The ship sailed from Glasgow on 28 September 1852. Accompanying him was his younger brother, Duncan, also a 'farmer', who at 26 was two years his junior. Both travelled as unassisted migrants, i.e. they paid their own way. The *Birman* reached Melbourne on 21 January 1853, which means that the voyage took almost four months.

The next we hear of James is his marriage in Scots Presbyterian Church, Collins Street, Melbourne on 27 November 1860. In the marriage register he is described as a 32-year-old farmer of Whittlesea, a farming area 58 kilometres north-east of Melbourne. He gave the wrong age to the minister, the Rev. Irving Hetherington (1809–1875), because he was 36. His bride, Mary McDonald of Merri Creek (near Beveridge, 54 kilometres north of Melbourne), was only 20 and gave her occupation as 'Lady'. As we will see, she was the Melbourne-born daughter of Scottish immigrants, Ewen McDonald, a farmer, and his wife Isabella (née McBain).

Duncan had meanwhile settled at Tullamarine, now the site of Melbourne's vast international airport. He must have been James's best man, because he signed the marriage certificate as a witness. Between the late 1850s and early 1870s Duncan occupied a property and built a homestead that he called 'Victoria Bank'. He later moved to Lilydale, but his sons returned to the Tullamarine–Keilor area. Their descendants were still living thereabouts in the 1960s. One of them, William MacNab, had been five times the president of the Shire of Keilor. Another, Ian MacNab, was later shire president three times. Mcnabs Road on the western side of the airport is a reminder of their occupancy.

James and Mary probably lived at Whittlesea for five or six years before moving 85 kilometres north to take up land on the Goulburn River at Tabilk, 130 kilometres north of Melbourne between Avenel and Nagambie. That would have been about 1866–1867, when small farms were established there. According to one family tradition, a party of 12 Scottish families trekked overland from the Whittlesea-Yan Yean area to occupy the land around Tabilk.

James named his property 'Islay Vale'. It was a 175-hectare (432-acre) block of rich alluvial land east of the Goulburn River. Its western boundary was the long and winding Tabilk Lagoon, a cut-off meander of the Goulburn. The next property to the west was the Tahbilk Estate, home of the now famous Chateau Tahbilk vineyards and winery. (The winery added an 'h' to the name.)

Incidentally, the name of the Hebridean island Islay is pronounced 'eye-lə' (rhymes with 'tiler'). (In the International Phonetic Alphabet 'ə' represents the unstressed 'uh' sound.) Locally in the Tabilk-Nagambie-Avenel area, however, 'Islay' is pronounced 'eye-lee' (rhymes with 'smiley').

Over the following years James turned 'Islay Vale' into a model farming estate. He built there a substantial homestead, workers' cottages, barns, stables, carriage and machinery sheds, cellars and other outbuildings. He grew both wheat and grapevines and vinted his own wine. He became a highly successful, prosperous farmer. In 1876 he won the bronze medallion first prize for a bushel sample of wheat at the Philadelphia international trade-fair held to celebrate the centenary of US independence.

Nowadays 'Islay Vale' is a pedigree horse stud. The address is now 114 O'Neil's Road. Last time it exchanged hands, in January 2024, it sold for $8.25 million.

In the 14 years 1863–1877, James and Mary produced a family of nine children — seven girls and two boys. In birth order they were: Flora Ann (born at Whittlesea 1862, died at Nagambie 1937); Isabella (born at Whittlesea 1863, died in East Melbourne 1901); Maria (born at Whittlesea 1865, later Mrs Hewett); Alexina (born Avenel, 1867, also known as 'Alice', later Mrs Coulstone and then Mrs Batchelor); Malcolm James (born Avenel 1869, died at Nagambie 1944), Jessie (born at Tabilk 1871, died in East St Kilda 1950), Christina (born in Nagambie 1874, died in South Melbourne 1961), William John (born at Tabilk 1876, died at Werribee 1930) and Melina (born at Tabilk 1877, later Mrs Roberts, died at Numurkah 1965).

The first three were born at Whittlesea, the rest in the Tabilk-Avenel-Nagambie district. This suggests that the move to Tabilk occurred at some time between the birth of Maria in Whittlesea in 1865 and of Alexina in Avenel in 1867.

James died at 'Islay Vale' on 9 November 1891. The cause of death was chronic nephritis, an occluded heart and peritonitis, i.e. a combination of kidney disease, heart disease and perhaps a ruptured appendix or some other organ. The family believed his death was the delayed effect of his having been gored by his prize jersey bull a year earlier.

The funeral took place two days later in the Nagambie cemetery, 7 kilometres from 'Islay Vale'. The local Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Hugh McFarlane, conducted the service. The obituary in the *Nagambie Times* on 13th November observed that James had been 'a very old and highly respected resident of the district'. He was, the obituary said, 'highly respected by all who knew him', something evident the large crowd present at the funeral.

Some 40 years ago, when I began researching MacNab family history, one of James's granddaughters, Nancy Millar (née MacNab, my mother-in-law's younger sister), wrote about him for me. She said he was 'a sincere churchman' who was 'very civic-minded'. For example, during one prolonged drought the Tabilk school ran out of water. His own children attended the school. He took it upon himself to cart water to it daily, an 8-mile (13-kilometre) round trip. (The school was extant for 105 years, 1868–1973.)

At the time of his death, James had been in Australia for almost 38 years. He never returned to Islay, but his family remained in contact with their Islay relatives. Almost until her death in 1937, Flora Ann MacNab, his firstborn, corresponded with one of her Islay first cousins, one M. MacTaggart, who lived in Bank Place, Bowmore. This would have been Colonel Murdoch MacTaggart, a solicitor, agent for the Royal Bank of Scotland and Sunday School teacher who taught his class to read the Bible in Gaelic. His father had married Betty MacNab (born 1827), James's younger sister.

Eighteen days after James's death, Flora ('Florrie') published this tribute in verse to her father in the *Nagambie Times*:

We miss thee from our home, dear father,
We miss thee from thy place.
A shadow o'er our life is cast,
We miss the sunshine of thy face.
We miss thy kind and willing hand,
Thy fond and earnest care,
Our home is dark without thee —
We miss thee everywhere.

It would have won no poetry prizes, but it suggests something of his children's deep love and respect for their paterfamilias. Unfortunately, none of his photos have survived.

6. Mary (Maria) McDonald (1840–1912)

Mary McDonald (1840–1912) was born in Melbourne on 19 July 1840. As seen, she was a daughter of Scottish immigrant parents, Ewen McDonald (also MacDonald) and Isabella (née McBain).

Ewen McDonald (1804–1858) was born in Boleskine, Inverness-shire, a parish on the eastern shore of Loch Ness. Isabella (1808–1888) had been born 36 kilometres to the south-east, at Kingussie on the main highway north (now the A9) from Edinburgh to Inverness. They married about 1827, but exactly where is unknown.

Ewen and Isabella emigrated to Port Phillip with the first four of their eight children at some time during 1837. They sailed from Inverness aboard the *St George*, arriving at the end of the year during a very hot summer of dust storms. In their first months in Melbourne, they lived in rented accommodation in two places, at the top end of Queen Street and in Elizabeth Street, before buying land in Russell Street, where they built several houses, some of which were leased to other Scottish immigrants.

On various occasions the McDonalds and their fellow immigrants from the *St George* met parties of the local Aborigines, of whom they were very wary. One time, soon after they reached Melbourne, various of the women took their washing down to the Yarra. After they'd finished, they hung it on surrounding bushes to dry. They had just finished when a party of spear-carrying Aborigines approached to see what they were doing. Taking fright, the women fled, abandoning the washing. When they returned later, the washing was exactly as they'd left it.

While the McDonalds were living in Elizabeth Street they lost their youngest child. His name is now forgotten, but he was only two years old. On the voyage from Scotland one of the sailors had carved a toy boat for him. One day he went to sail his boat on a pond in front of the house. He must have toppled in and drowned, because a neighbour found him floating there later. He was, reputedly, the first white child to have drowned in Melbourne. After that tragedy, Isabella could not abide living in the Elizabeth Street house; and so they moved to Russell Street. The first of their four Australian-born children, Mary (also called Maria) was born about this time.

At some point after this, perhaps during the early to mid–1840s, Ewen bought farming land on the wide volcanic plains to Melbourne's north. He and the family established their farm at Bald Hill, about 34 kilometres north of Melbourne near the highway to Sydney. As the name suggests, the property occupies the lower slopes of a prominent treeless hill. Its bluestone basalt homestead still extant. The farm is 3 kilometres south of Beveridge and between there and Kalkallo, nearer again to Melbourne. They referred to the area as 'Merri Creek' because the Merri (a Yarra tributary) meandered along the eastern side of their land. Nowadays the main Melbourne–Sydney railway line runs past the house as well, a couple of hundred metres to the east.

Ewen died at Bald Hill on 28 February 1858 from the combined effects of a cold and dysentery, from which he had been suffering for 11 days. He was buried two days later at Campbellfield, back towards Melbourne, in the churchyard of the beautiful little bluestone Scots Presbyterian Church, Victoria's oldest church and still standing after 182 years. (Sadly, the block it stands on has been almost swallowed by sprawling industrial suburbia.) He was survived by Isabella and their seven living children: Jessie (age 27, born 1830, Mrs Thane), Isabella (24, born 1833), Alexander (22, born 1835), Mary (19, born 1840, Mrs MacNab), John (15, born 1844), Christina (12, born 1846) and Catherine (10, born 1848).

After 30 years of widowhood, Isabella died at age 80 from heart disease and old age at Bald Hill on 8 October 1888. She, too, was buried at Campbellfield. Unfortunately, neither her grave nor Ewen's has a headstone, and the location of the graves has been forgotten.

Apart from her little drowned boy, Isabella was predeceased by three of her children, John, Christina and Anne (about whom nothing else is known).

As seen, Mary/Maria, the first of the four Australian-born McDonald children, was married to James MacNab in Scots Church, Melbourne on 27 November 1860 at age 20. How she and James MacNab came to meet is unknown, but we might guess that the Scottish community in and around Melbourne was fairly close-knit. Bound by their common ethnicity, Presbyterian faith and support for their 'Scotch' schools and churches, they formed a cohesive network. Hardworking young newcomers like James and Duncan MacNab were probably made to feel welcome.

Much of Mary's post-marriage story has already been told in the previous section. She survived her husband by some 20 years. She died at 'Islay Vale' on 14 March 1912 from both mitral regurgitation (defective heart valve) and gastroenteritis. She was buried in the family grave in Nagambie four days later. The Rev. H.A. Buntine conducted the service.

The *Nagambie Times* eulogised Mary, saying that 'the deceased lady' was a 'highly respected, well-known' resident of the district'. It noted that after her husband's death, she 'successfully carried on farming and pastoral pursuits' with the support of her family. In her long widowhood she had proved herself to be 'a keen businesswoman'.

The previous section mentioned that Mary produced nine children, all of whom survived into adulthood. As they're important in Margaret's family lore, I'll briefly profile them here. They were:

- Flora Ann ('Florrie', 1862–1937), remained single and lived at Tabilk until her death. She was buried in the family grave in the Nagambie cemetery.
- Isabella ('Bella', 1863–1901), never married and was the first of the nine siblings to die, at age 37. She was buried in the family grave in the Nagambie cemetery. She was the second after her father to be buried there.
- Maria (1865–unknown), married a Catholic chap called George William Hewett in her mother's residence on 2 March 1910. Rev. John Darroch, a Presbyterian minister from Bendigo, performed the ceremony. Maria was then disinherited and expelled from the family. After the marriage, she and her husband disappeared from the historical record. Their deaths do not seem to have occurred in Victoria so perhaps they moved interstate.
- Alexina ('Alice', 1867–1948) married twice. Her first husband was a chap called William Coulstone, whom she married in 1896. He had previously been the fiancé of her younger sister, Christine. She bore him two children: first William James Goulburn Coulstone, who was born in 1897 and later married and had two children; and second was Alice Linda Islee [alternatively 'Islay'] Coulstone, who was known by her second name, Linda, and was born in 1900. What happened to William Coulstone Snr. is unknown He disappears from the historical record after Linda's birth. Presumably he died, because Alice remarried in 1909.

  In 1925 Linda Coulstone married Benjamin Wilhelm Schultz, who must have been of German extraction. Linda had three children who all married. For a time Linda was the 'Sewing Mistress' at the Tabilk school, i.e. a teacher's aide. Linda apparently didn't know (or had forgotten) that her maiden name was Coulstone. It came as a great shock to her on the day of her wedding to discover that it wasn't 'Batchelor', her mother's surname.

  Alice's second husband was William James ('Jim') Batchelor, whom she married in 1909 at age 42. He died in Nagambie at age 58 in 1921. In her later years Alice lived

in a house she called 'Glen Islay' in Balaclava. She died in Brighton in 1948 at age 81. She was buried in the same grave as her younger brother, William John, in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

- Malcolm James (1869–1944) was the older of the family's two boys. He never married. Age 22 when his father died, he took over the running of 'Islay Vale'. A genial chap, he was remembered affectionately by his various nieces and nephews. My mother-in-law, Flora Jessie Vale ('Sandy', 1915–1988, née MacNab), who was born at 'Islay Vale', remembered her visits back there when she was a schoolgirl in Melbourne. Malcolm would collect her in a buggy from the Avenel train station for the 16-kilometre ride to the farm. For 'Sandy' it was a great adventure.
- Jessie (1871–1959) never married. At one stage she became engaged to a German chap named Fred Zimmerman. Her mother disapproved, however, and forced Jessie to break off the engagement. She lived on at 'Islay Vale' until the property was sold in the years after World War II, perhaps 1947 or 48. She then moved to Melbourne, where she spent the rest of her life living with her sisters Chrissie and Minnie in a house at 3 Green Street, Prahran.
- Christina ('Chrissie', 1874–1960) was the fourth daughter who never married. She almost made it to the altar, however. She was dressed in her bridal attire and about to be driven to the Nagambie Presbyterian Church to be married to her fiancé, William Coulstone. But then she called off the marriage. According to family lore, she'd just discovered that Coulstone had been having an affair with her older sister Alexina/Alice and had been with her that morning. "I'm not going through with it!" she declared. Her brother Malcolm was sent to the church to explain to the minister and guests that the marriage wouldn't proceed. Like Jessie, Chrissie lived on at 'Islay Vale' until the property was sold, then moved to Prahran with Jessie and Minnie.
- William John ('Bill', 1876–1930) was the second son. He is discussed below in the section dealing with Margaret's grandparents. Suffice to say here that he married Flora Cameron Georgina Morrow McNeil in 1910 and they produced six children over the next ten years. Most of his parents' many living descendants spring from the MacNab–McNeil marriage.
- Melina ('Minnie', 1878–1965) lived at 'Islay Vale' until she married William Edward Roberts in 1918. He was 52 and she was 41. They then lived in Numurkah, north of Shepparton in north-central Victoria. He died there at age 72 in 1938. They had no children. As seen, after World War II she lived with her sisters Jessie and Chrissie in Prahran.

In reflecting on James and Mary MacNab's nine children, I realise that only the two sons, Malcolm and Bill, could be gainfully employed because both had grown up as farmers. They had accordingly acquired the multiple agricultural, mechanical and business skills required for running a successful farm. The girls, by contrast, were raised for domesticity rather than salaried trades or professions. The assumption seemed to be that they'd all marry, become housewives and raise many children like their mother had done. Like their mother at her marriage, they regarded themselves as 'Ladies'.

We have seen how James MacNab had improved his station in life by quitting Islay. Emigrating to Australia was an excellent career move! For James and his brother Duncan Australia had proved a land of opportunity. In the space of a couple of decades they went from being landless rural labourers at Kilarrow to prosperous famers and landowners in Victoria.

I cannot leave the MacNabs of 'Islay Vale' without saying that I'm astounded by the conflicts that must have seethed behind the genteel façade of Presbyterian respectability that they presented to the outside world. Maria's banishment for having married a Catholic, Alexina's/Alice's affair with her sister's fiancé, Chrissie's last-minute cancellation of her marriage, the breaking of Jessie's engagement at her mother's insistence and Bill's enforced separation from his wife and children (discussed below) were all great family tragedies that must have pitted the siblings against each other and/or their mother.

7. Donald William McNeil (1849–1928)

Donald William McNeil (1849–1928) was born on 5 March 1849 in Drynoch, Isle of Skye, Scotland. His parents were Gaelic-speaking Norman McNeil (1817–1873), also born in Drynoch, and Marion née McDonald (1821–1898), who was born in Dunvegan, 17 kilometres north-west of Drynoch. Norman and Marion had married on 10 April 1847 in the recently built Bracadale Free Presbyterian chapel, 3 kilometres west of Drynoch near Carbost. Donald was probably baptised there.

On our trips to Skye, which we've now visited five times, we have always visited the chapel. On our last visit, about 12 years ago, we attended the Sunday evening service there. About 30 people were present. They made us welcome but were curious about why a family of five Australians — Rosie, Jon, Grace, Margaret and I — should choose to worship with them. When we explained that Margaret's great-great-grandparents had married in the chapel about 160 years earlier, they seemed pleased that people from so far away in time and place had remembered their connection with the church.

a) The McNeil children

Donald was the second of seven children born to Norman and Marion. Only two of them survived. Catherine, the oldest, Hugh, Margaret, a second Hugh and John all died. Donald, and an Australia-born sister, Mary Ann ('Annie', 1861–1940), the youngest, 12 years his junior, were the only two who reached adulthood.

Catherine died as an infant on Skye; Hugh I was born aboard the ship *Wanata* on the family's voyage to Australia, but also died young; Margaret and John seem to have been born and died after the family settled at Whittlesea, north-east of Melbourne. Hugh II, who died at age 5 in 1860, was certainly born after the family's arrival in Australia.

Losing five of seven children must have caused Marion untold grief. One reason that families were so large among that immigrant generation was the high infant mortality rate. The more children a family had, the more likely some of them would live beyond childhood. If five of a family's seven children could die young, hopefully the surviving two would pass on the family genes. Another reason for large families was the household's workforce. More children meant more hands to help with farming and domestic duties. The loss of so many children must have pained the mothers especially. That the death of one's young children was a fact of life did not make the experience any more bearable. Poor Marion had to endure the grieving process five times.

b) Gaelic

The McNeils' first language was Gaelic. Donald spoke it for the rest of his life. He even taught his own children Gaelic sayings, verses of scripture and poems. When they were young, he used to read the Gaelic Bible to his children daily. In their old age, his daughters could still recite snatches of the Gaelic he had taught them.

According to his younger daughters, who told me the story, one of Donald's proud boasts was that The Macneil, the clan chief, who lived in Kisimul Castle on the Isle of Barra in the outer Hebrides, used to send his piper round the battlements to play as he dined. When The Macneil had finished eating, the piper would loudly proclaim:

Hear ye people, and listen oh ye nations!
The great Macneil of Barra, having finished his meal,
the princes of the earth may now dine!

As the castle stands on a rock in the harbour 100 metres off Castlebay, the main village, few could have heard the piper's announcement. Margaret has always been amused by the arrogance of the boast.

Another of Donald's sayings, in English, was this toast:

Here's tae us!
Wha's like us?
Damn few,
mair's the pity,
an' they're a' deid!

As a party trick we recite it together when we have guests who appreciate the family's Scottish heritage.

c) To Australia

The McNeils sailed to Australia aboard the *Wanata* from Liverpool on 10 June 1852. It reached Melbourne 16 weeks and 4 days later, on 4th October. Donald was only 3 years and 10 months old when he arrived. How on earth the family had travelled from Skye to Liverpool for the long voyage to Australia is unknown. Perhaps they were ferried there by sea. An overland journey would have been a logistical nightmare.

The *Wanata* passenger list provides useful information about the 728 passengers aboard. At least 52 of them died between Liverpool and Melbourne, an average of one every two or three days. Many were from Inverness-shire, which included Skye; and many were surnamed McNeil and McDonald. Some of them were Norman's and Marion's relatives. Norman's occupation was given as shepherd. He could read and write but Marion could only read. His age was given at 34, but he was probably 35 or 36; Marion's age was correctly given as 31. Both were listed as Presbyterians. Interestingly, an unnamed infant was born to Marion during the voyage. That could have been Margaret, one of her five children who did not survive.

But why did they leave Skye?

They probably had no choice. The 1850s was the time of the 'Clearances' on Skye, when landlords expelled the subsistence-level crofters to make way for sheep pastures and grouse moors. Some 30,000 people evicted from their homes emigrated from Skye over the four decades 1840–1880. Glen Drynoch was very thoroughly cleared. Nowadays the glen boasts only a dozen houses, all recent structures; and the former Drynoch village has even fewer. The alternating mounds and ridges of the crofters' ancient 'runrig' fields can nevertheless still be seen on either side of the A863 road running down the glen to Loch Harport.

We can only guess at the sorrow the McNeils must have felt at leaving the only home they had ever known. If they left relatives behind, they knew they would never see them again. Skye was a four-month journey from Melbourne. Even if they prospered in their new home on the far side of the world, returning to Skye might not have been a welcome prospect

because they had nothing to return to. Their homes were in ruins and most of their kinfolk had gone.

As things turned out for the McNeils, the McDonalds, the MacNabs and their ilk, Australia gave them a future that Scotland never could. In Drynoch Norman was a landless shepherd working on the 'Gesto' estate near Drynoch. In Australia he farmed his own land at Yan Yean. He could afford to send his one surviving son, Donald, to Scotch College, Melbourne's oldest school and among Australia's best.

d) Yan Yean

As we shall see, Donald was an enterprising chap. After primary schooling in Preston, he attended Scotch College. He then spent 14 years as a commercial traveller with Beath, Schiess & Co., a firm of importers in Flinders Lane in the Melbourne central business district. In time he became a wealthy merchant and landowner, sent his own sons to Scotch College, served as mayor of Warragul and met royalty.

Meanwhile, Norman had died of pneumonia at Yan Yean at age 57 on 23 December 1873. He was buried two days later, Christmas Day, in the Darebin Creek Cemetery, now a part of the Preston General Cemetery. No known photo of Norman survives, but Marion's sole surviving portrait, a photo probably taken during her early 50s, shows her as a plump and typically serious-minded, thoughtful little Scotswoman. Marion survived Norman by 24 years. She died of acute bronchitis and cardiac failure in Hawthorn on 26 January 1898 at age 78 and was buried next day at Darebin Creek. In the intervening years Donald had been caring for his mother and increasingly eccentric unmarried sister Annie. Annie died at age 79 in 1940. Who cared for her after Donald's death in 1928 is uncertain, but she spent her last few years in an aged persons' home in Cheltenham.

Donald gave up commercial travelling about 1876. For a time he lived with his mother and sister in Hawthorn. He then became the partner of one Eaton Stannard Purcell in the general store at Yea, 132 kilometres north-east of Melbourne. In 1878 Purcell became his brother-in-law because he married Margaret Arkell, a younger sister of Purcell's wife, Anne Arkell, who had married Purcell in 1871.

e) Marriage and a large family

Donald and Margaret Louisa Arkell (1858–1926) married in her parents' home in Wandong, south-east of Kilmore on 9 October 1878. He was 29 and she was 19. He was described as a storekeeper, she as a domestic. The officiating minister was the Rev. William Miller MacKie, the minister of the Donnybrook Presbyterian Church, 20 kilometres south of Wandong. The witnesses to the marriage were Duncan Cameron Arkell, the bride's oldest brother and William McDonald, who was perhaps the groom's cousin or uncle on his mother's side.

Donald and Margaret would have a family of 14 children, seven boys and seven girls, as follows: John Norman (who died at 7 months in 1880), Agnes Isabella (1881–1970, later Mrs Barbour), Charles Stuart (1883–1971), Reginald Donald Gordon (1885–1974), Flora Cameron Georgina Morrow (1887–1924, later Mrs MacNab), Marion Margaret Louisa (1889–1963, later Mrs Swan), Allan George Martin (1891–1908), Harold Leslie (1892–1975), Jessie Jane (1894–1995), Sylvia Annie May (1896–1959, later Mrs Roderick), Duncan Cameron (born and died in 1898 at 3 months), Margaret Louisa Arkell (1899–2001, later Mrs Hutton-Wilson), Archibald Richmond (1902–1998) and Alison Mary (1904–1997), later Mrs Callander).

As this list indicates, of the 14 children of the family, three of the boys did not reach adulthood. The first and fifth, John and Duncan, both died in their year of birth; and Allan

died at 17. Allan's death was from a gunshot wound while out shooting with his brothers. As he clambered through a wire fence, his gun fired, killing him. The four surviving sons all married and had children. Five of the seven daughters married and had children; one, Marion, married at 43 and remained childless; and one, Jessie Jane (known as Jane) never married. Several of the girls were very long-lived. Jessie Jane and Margaret both live till 101, Alison lived till 93 and Agnes lived till 86. Of the boys, Charles died at 88, Reginald at 89, Harold at 85 and Archie at 96.

f) Warragul

Donald remained E.S. Purcell's partner until 1894, when he and the family moved to Warragul, 102 kilometres south-east of Melbourne and the main town and service centre for the West Gippsland region. There at 75 Queen Street he opened his own family business, D. McNeil & Co's Central Emporium, a department store opposite the railway station. It was a large business with drapery, grocery, wine and spirits and hardware departments. His older sons later joined him in the business and took it over after his retirement. The building is still standing and still has 'Central Emporium' and 'D. McNeil & Co' in prominent lettering along the fascia above the shopfront, but these days it is a gymnasium and fitness centre.

During his time as E.S. Purcell's partner, and before the move to Warragul, Donald and his wife and young children, lived for a period in a house called 'Hillgrove' in Brook Street, Hawthorn, while he worked again as a commercial traveller. It was there that his fourth surviving child, Flora Cameron Georgina Morrow McNeil, was born on 5 October 1887. 'Hillgrove' was possibly the one he had bought for his mother and unmarried sister Annie. Be that as it may, Donald and family were still there five years later, in September 1892, because his son Harold was born there then. The street number of 'Hillgrove' is unknown, but present-day No. 31 closely resembles an ancient photograph of Donald, his wife, mother, sister and several others arranged in a row outside such a house.

In Warragul Donald built a spacious single-storey 6-bedroom home, 'Colonsay', on 20 acres (8.1 hectares) on the present eastern corner of Albert and Gladstone Streets. The family lived there until Donald retired in 1918 at age 69. By then the older children had married and moved away. The estate was subsequently subdivided but the house remained there until about 2007–2008. I visited it in 1985, by which time it had been partially demolished but the remaining southern section, in Gladstone Street, was being occupied by a Christian revival centre. A Google satellite map search just now indicates that the remaining section was demolished by 2008. A pathology centre currently occupies the site.

In Warragul Donald had been a leading local citizen. A staunch Presbyterian, he became an Elder at the local Presbyterian church. He became a Justice of the Peace and henceforth was Mr Donald McNeil J.P. He was also elected as a Warragul Shire councillor soon after moving to the town. He was Shire President in 1901, the year of Australian federation. As such he and Margaret were official guests at the inauguration of the Commonwealth Parliament in the Melbourne Exhibition Building on 9 May 1901. The opening ceremony was performed by the Duke of Cornwall and York, later King George V. During the royal tour that followed, Donald officially welcomed the Duke and Duchess (Mary, later Queen Mary) to Warragul. He presented the royal couple with a gold-mounted walking stick made from fiddleback wood. (What happened to it afterwards is unknown; but perhaps it joined the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle or one of the other royal residences.)

g) 'Andover'

After retiring to Melbourne, Donald, Margaret and the six unmarried children — Marion, Jessie Jane, Sylvia, Margaret, Archie and Alison — moved into 'Andover', a large and gracious single-storey Victorian-era home at 165 Church Street, Middle Brighton. Of red-brick with a slate roof, it has a verandah along the front and western sides embellished with elaborate wrought iron. It's currently valued at $6–7 million. Margaret Louisa died there on 2 March 1926 from nephritis and syncope (i.e. kidney disease and fainting fits from low blood pressure). Donald survived her by 2 years and 5 months. He died there from heart disease and asthma on 10 August 1928. Both were buried in a family grave in the Brighton Cemetery.

Donald's last years were pain-ridden. For several years he had been severely crippled by arthritis. He spent most of his waking hours in a wheelchair. Despite that, he regularly attended his local Presbyterian church, St Cuthbert's, a kilometre away in Wilson Street, where some of his children and grandchildren married.

Numerous photos of Donald have survived. The earliest show him as a young man in his early 30s. In the last of them he's a wheelchair-bound old chap gazing sternly at the camera, his characteristic handle-bar moustache emphasising his authority as the McNeil paterfamilias.

8. Margaret Louisa Arkell (1858–1926)

As seen, Margaret Louisa Arkell (1858–1926) married Donald McNeil in her parents' home in Wandong, east of Bylands, on 9 October 1878. She was Australian-born of an English father, Frederick George Arkell (1825–1920), and a Scottish mother, Flora Cameron (1825–1884). She was born on Boxing Day 1858 in the family home in Bylands, the sixth child and third of four daughters of a family of nine children. Six of the nine, three of the daughters and three of the sons survived until adulthood.

a) Margaret Louisa Arkell's father

The story of Margaret Louisa Arkell's parents is a 'rags-to-riches' saga that ended happily. For her father it was one of transition from petty criminality and transportation as a convict to successful entrepreneurship, wealth, community leadership and respectability. For her mother it was a rise from illiterate milkmaid to minor colonial gentry.

Frederick George Arkell, whom I'll now refer to as 'FGA', was born in Stepney, London, on 15 May 1825, the youngest of eight children of James Arkell (1778–1840) and his wife Mary née Pearce (1789–1870). James and Mary were both from Gloucestershire, but James's great-great-grandfather, Thomas Walraven van Arkell (1613–1693) had immigrated to Gloucestershire from the Netherlands and had farmed at Sevenhampton. Arkell is a Dutch name and the name of a town, Arkel (only one 'l') in the Netherlands, 46 kilometres east of Rotterdam and 37 kilometres south of Utrecht. The name is derived from 'Erkel', originally 'Hercules' and a local Roman temple dedicated to that heroic deity.

b) Frederick George Arkell the 'Exile'

On 7 April 1845, five weeks before his 20th birthday, FGA pleaded guilty in London's Central Criminal Court (the 'Old Bailey') to three charges of larceny as a servant. As a commercial traveller, he had stolen from two employers, a paper-hanger and decorator and a wool merchant, goods worth £9/14/6 or about $2400 in present values. He was sentenced to seven years' transportation to Australia.

FGA spent 20 months in prison in London, at first in Pentonville in Islington and later at Millbank in Westminster, before being shipped off to the Port Phillip colony, i.e. Victoria. During that time he probably received some trade training in carpentry because, technically, he was being sent as an 'exile' not a 'convict'. Transportation to New South Wales ended in 1840 and Victoria had always been convict-free; however, because employers there wanted cheap labour, the British government devised a scheme under which convicts with a record of good behaviour could be sent to Melbourne as 'exiles' then granted a conditional pardon on their arrival. The conditions were that the exilee must not return to Britain until the sentence had expired and would be bound to an employer for a fixed period and wage before being released.

FGA sailed for Port Phillip aboard the convict transport ship *Sir Thomas Arbuthnot*, which left from Spithead near Portsmouth on 10 January 1847. He was one of 290 exiles aboard, all but one of whom survived the voyage. Two days after the ship's departure, *The Times* newspaper wrote that they were the first consignment of 'exiles' sent to the colony. Many of the colony's residents were 'very wroth at' the government's decision to send convicts to Victoria; however, those aboard were 'a superior class of delinquents'; they represented 'all trades in vogue'; and 'the greatest majority of [them were] juvenile offenders'. The ship reached Melbourne four months later, on 10 May 1847. FGA had his 21st birthday five days later. Amazingly, during the long voyage the involuntary 'passengers' produced their own newspaper.

In FGA's case, after allowing for his 20-month imprisonment in London, and counting from the time he eventually left Britain, 10 January 1847, he would not be permitted to go back home until 10 May 1852. He was assigned to Hugh Glass (1817-1871), an Irish-born speculator, merchant and squatter, who agreed to employ him for six months for £25 (about $6500 in present-day values). As things turned out, FGA never returned but instead made a new start in Victoria. He maximised his opportunities, developed remarkable entrepreneurial skills and interests, and married and became the paterfamilias to a large family. Being civic-minded, he also became a respected leader in his local community. For FGA, larceny as a servant eventually paid off!

c) Making good in a land of opportunity

Briefly, FGA's life and career in Victoria ran as follows: within 20 months of arriving in Melbourne he married Flora Cameron, a milkmaid from Kilmonivaig near Spean Bridge in Scotland who was two months younger than him. They married in St James's Anglican Cathedral in central Melbourne on 27 August 1849. They both gave their addresses as Campbellfield, where Hugh Glass held property and had settled various Scots whose immigration he had sponsored. Perhaps they had met while they were each working for the local 'squire', Glass.

FGA's movements during his first four years in Victoria are uncertain. After his bonding to Hugh Glass ended, he spent some time as a police constable and watch-house keeper in Portland. In 1850 he was fined £1 in the Melbourne Magistrate's court for 'negligently permitting a prisoner to escape'.

When gold was discovered in Bendigo in 1851, FGA tried his luck there. Among the first prospectors to sink a shaft, he struck gold. He also became a general produce merchant, profiting greatly from selling flour, potatoes and eggs to the miners. He invested his earnings in land along the Plenty River at present-day Whittlesea. When the town was gazetted in 1853, he opened its first general store and bakery. He sold this business to his brother-in-law John Wishart (husband of his wife's sister or cousin Agnes) in 1855. He then began buying

up land at Bylands, at the top of Pretty Sally Hill 6 kilometres south of Kilmore on the road to Melbourne.

Over the next 24 years FGA bought other nearby land until by 1879 he owned 868 acres (about 351.3 hectares) of prime agricultural land. The frontage of his estate ran along the north side of the dirt road between Bylands in the west and Heathcote Junction to the east which now bears his name — Arkells Lane. He named his property 'Dene Park', after the former 'Dene' squatting run, which had been subdivided.

FGA began by grazing sheep and selling meat to local residents, but with an eye on the main chance, he opened a sawmill to transform the logs from the trees he felled for pastures into timber for Melbourne's goldrush-fuelled building boom. His specialty was fencing palings, which were greatly in demand in both Melbourne and Sydney. Perhaps at his suggestion, the colonial government ran a branch railway line through his property from nearby Heathcote Junction (at the eastern end of Arkells Lane). That was where the main north-eastern line was being built from Melbourne towards Sydney. The branch line, which ran up to Bylands and eventually Kilmore and Bendigo, remained in use until closed in 1968. The branch line obviated the need to transport the timber by slow-moving horse teams.

In 1876 FGA established a general store and post office at Wandong, just north of Heathcote Junction, as a settlement sprang up around the railway station there. A residence attached to the store was where the Arkell family lived. The building later burnt down. At some stage he had also built and occupied the homestead off Arkells Lane which was the main structure on his 'Dene Park' estate.

The name Wandong, previously known as Morphett's Siding, was adopted at FGA's suggestion. FGA also had an interest in the local hotel. If there was a business opportunity, he was quick to exploit it.

FGA, however, was no mere profiteer. Wherever he settled, he invested time, effort and resources in developing the local community. In Whittlesea, for example, he helped establish an Anglican denominational school then served as one of its trustees for the next 20 years. After settling at Bylands, he became a member and later the chairman of the local District Roads Board, the precursor to the Merriang Shire Council (the municipality including Bylands, Wandong, Wallan and other nearby settlements). In 1864 he called a public meeting to initiate the establishment of a local school. He was then its 'correspondent' (council secretary) for the 14 years it was extant, 1864–1877. He was also instrumental in establishing an Anglican Church at Lightwood Flat (immediately south of Heathcote Junction). And he helped the Primitive Methodists establish their chapel in Wandong.

After Flora's death in 1884, FGA possibly lived alone at 'Dene Park', where he had built a spacious colonial-style weatherboard home with a pitched corrugated iron roof and wide verandas on all sides. As the family had expanded, new sections were added. The house, down a driveway off Arkells Lane, is still standing almost 180 years after he began building it. His numerous grandchildren loved their holidays there. I remember Margaret's great-aunts, Jessie Jane McNeil and Margaret Hutton-Wilson, telling me how they enjoyed running from the house to see the goods trains chugging through the property on their way to and from Bylands.

FGA remarried the next year, 1885, at the age of 60. His second wife was a woman called Martha Jane Key (c.1837–1910) who was about 12 years younger than him. His family opposed the marriage because they feared she would inherit his property; however, she predeceased him at the age of 73 in 1910.

d) Retirement

In 1896 at age 71 FGA sold his properties in Bylands and Wandong to retire to Melbourne. He and Martha retired to 33 Hutcheson Street, Moonee Ponds. The house is still standing. A single storey, double-fronted, red-brick Victorian-era dwelling with slate roof and a wrought-iron front fence, and an ancient Canary Island date palm in the front yard, it sits on the south-west corner of Hutcheson & Heritage Streets. It probably looks little different now to what it did when he moved there 128 years ago. Its current value is an estimated $2.4 million.

FGA survived Martha Jane by almost 10 years. He died of heart disease on 5 January 1920 at the age of almost 94 years and 8 months. He was buried in the Fawkner General Cemetery in the same grave as his second wife. The simple inscription on his grave reads 'Sacred to the memory of Frederick G. Arkell, died 5th January 1920, age 92'. It got his age wrong. He was well over two years more than that.

Did FGA's wives and children ever discover why he had come to Australia? Perhaps Flora knew but was probably reluctant mention it to her children. My reason for thinking so is the information on his death certificate. This was provided by his oldest son, Duncan Cameron Arkell, who was 64 and a farmer at Avenel at the time of FGA's death. In the column headed 'Name & Surname of Father & Mother (Maiden Name) and Occupation' [of the deceased], 'Unknown' is written twice. If Duncan didn't know who his paternal grandparents were, that suggests that they were never mentioned in the Arkell household. Duncan had been 24 when his paternal grandmother had died. Wasn't he told about that if FGA had known about it? Further, his surviving McNeil grandchildren seemed oblivious of the circumstances of his arrival in Victoria.

We can guess that if FGA's large family in London had been talked about when the Arkell children were growing up, the children might have asked questions that FGA was too ashamed or embarrassed to answer. Placing a taboo on mentioning his pre-Australian life was perhaps the easiest way of avoiding that.

FGA's obituary in the *Yea Chronicle* also hints that FGA laid a smokescreen across his early life. It said he had been born in Manchester and that he had 'emigrated' (not 'been exiled'). The newspaper would have been reporting what his Yea family had told its journalist, so whatever he'd said about his origins must have been deliberately wrong.

Be that as it may, FGA seems to have striven to cultivate a particular image of himself. His McNeil grandchildren remembered him as 'a very proper English gentleman'. His surviving photos show that he was tall and erect, with aristocratic features and a well-trimmed goatee beard. He wore well-tailored, three-piece tweed suits. Few who met him could have guessed that this highly respectable and prosperous-looking landowner, community leader, Anglican churchman and supporter of local schools had once been a 'Pentonvillain' — colloquial name for a 'Pentonvillean' exiled to Port Phillip.

e) And what did his mother think?

What we cannot know is what misery FGA's exile meant for his family in London. His father had died when he was 15, but his mother lived for another 25 years after his conviction and imprisonment.

When we reflect on that, a host of questions suggest themselves. For instance, was she in the Old Bailey to see her youngest sentenced to seven years' transportation? Was she able to visit him in the Pentonville and Millbank gaols? What tears did she shed for him? Did she and her son write to each other? And, if so, what did she think about her Scottish daughter-in-law and nine Australian grandchildren? Did she live in hope that her Australian family might one day visit her?

As for FGA, did he miss his family back in London? Did he hope to return there to visit them and show off his wife and children? Or did he consciously shut them from his heart and mind as a way of lessening the pain of separation and the shame of being a convict? Because none of FGA's correspondence seems to have survived, such questions have no answers.

One surviving photograph nevertheless suggests that FGA did maintain some contact with his family in England. It is a 1901 photograph of an elderly lady called Harriet Hardwick who was FGA's oldest sister. That such a portrait became a part of Australian 'Arkelliana' is evidence that he retained some links with his family in England.

We might surmise that if FGA's mother and oldest sister had known that he'd make good in the land of his exile, their sorrow in never seeing him again might have been easier to bear. They might also have taken pride in his many achievements.

f) Flora Cameron

As seen, Flora Cameron became FGA's first wife when they married in St James's Anglican Cathedral in central Melbourne on 27 August 1849. He signed his name 'Arkelle' with an extra 'e'; she signed with 'her mark', +, a cross, That meant she was illiterate, although she could read but not write. The witnesses to the marriage were Stephen Toogood, presumably the best man, and Margaret Cameron, the bride's sister, who also signed with a cross. The name of the officiating chaplain cannot be deciphered because his signature is illegible; however, it seems to end with '-owton'. All four members of the bridal party gave their address as Campbellfield.

Why they married in St James's rather than in the local Presbyterian church at Campbellfield is unknown. Perhaps it was because FGA was proudly Anglican and the cathedral in Melbourne was a more prestigious venue than a small rural church of another denomination out on the bare, windy plains to the north.

Flora was a recent immigrant. She had arrived in Melbourne aboard the ship *Blonde* on 15 October 1848. As the ship had sailed from Plymouth on 26th June, the voyage had lasted 16 weeks. On the passenger list her occupation was listed as milkmaid and her age 23; Margaret was listed a housemaid aged 21. Their place of birth was given as 'Fort William, Inverness'. Various other single Camerons were aboard; at least one of them, perhaps Angus aged 19 and a shepherd, was Flora's and Margaret's younger brother. Others among the Camerons aboard could have been their relatives.

One of them was an Agnes Cameron (c. 1830–1873), who might have been a sister or a cousin of Flora. She later married a Scots immigrant, John Wishart (c. 1812–1876). As seen, this chap, said to be FGA's brother-in-law, had taken over his general store in Whittlesea in 1855. The reason for thinking Agnes was a cousin is that her father's name was Duncan, whereas Flora's and Margaret's father was Donald. A difficulty here is that no Agnes Cameron appears in the Scottish parish birth registers as having been born to a Donald or Duncan Cameron at any time during the 1820s–1830s. Who exactly Agnes was, and where she fits into the Arkell-Cameron extended family therefore remains a mystery.

Flora's birthplace, as mentioned, was Kilmonivaig, a small village near Spean Bridge and 15 kilometres north-east of Fort William. She was born there on 17 July 1825. Both her parents were surnamed Cameron: Donald (or possibly Duncan, born 1801), a farmer, and Ann Cameron (1803–1877). Kilmonivaig was within the ancient province of Lochaber, the area of the western Highlands north of Fort William. This is the heart of Clan Cameron territory. Ann, if not Donald, was descended from the noble chiefs of both Cameron of Erracht and Cameron of Locheil and also the Macleans of Duart. She had ancestors who had fallen at Culloden in 1746 in the Jacobite uprising led by the 'Young Pretender', Charles

Edward Stuart (a.k.a. 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'). Among other ancestors, she was a granddaughter of Ewen Cameron, 8th chief of Cameron of Erracht.

After their marriage, Flora accompanied FGA as he moved from place to place pursuing his business opportunities. As seen, they lived in Portland, Bendigo, Whittlesea, Wandong and Bylands. Meanwhile, she bore him nine children, five sons and four daughters. They were: James (who died young); Ann ('Annie', 1852–1934, later Mrs Purcell); Mary Jane (1853–1862, died and was buried at age 9 in Yan Yean); Duncan Cameron (1856–1933); John ('Jack') Joseph (1859–1930); Margaret Louisa (1859–1926, later Mrs McNeil); Charles Walter (1861–1941); Jessie Jane (1862–1893, later Mrs Kempson); and Allen (also 'Allan') Ewen (also 'Hugh') (1863–1881).

As this list indicates, two of Flora's boys predeceased her: James and Allen Ewen (in some sources also 'Allan Hugh'). Flora herself died of heart and lung disease at Wandong on 25 June 1884. She was buried two days later in the Wallan Cemetery with Anglican rites. Both her death certificate and tombstone wrongly give her age as 57, but she was a month short of her 59th birthday. Her marble tombstone is well preserved if overgrown. It indicates that Allan Ewen and Jessie Jane were buried in the same grave.

Flora's one surviving photo, probably taken in her early 50s, shows her to have been a pleasant-faced, shortish, plump if not dumpy woman. She was wearing her 'Sunday best' of long dark skirt, dark jacket, elaborate blouse and a soft hat.

g) And now at last Margaret Louisa McNeil (née Arkell)

The preceding five pages detailing the lives of Frederick George and Flora Arkell have been a long but necessary digression. The stories about FGA and Flora are part of the lore of the extended McNeil and MacNab family and their descendants.

As seen in Section 7 (e) above, Margaret Louisa, which is what I'll call her to distinguish her from the various other Margarets in this chapter, married Donald McNeil at age 19 in her parents' home in Wandong on 9 October 1878.

How she spent the years before her marriage is unknown; however, as she was described as a 'domestic' on her marriage certificate, she probably helped her mother run the family home.

As seen earlier, Margaret Louisa bore Donald 14 children between the years 1880 and 1904. She was accordingly pregnant for 10½ of those 25 years. Her oldest children were already adults when the youngest were born. She accordingly had a very full-time job being a housewife and mother, at first in Yea, then in Hawthorn, Warragul and Brighton.

Margaret Louisa's extended family multiplied rapidly. Her 12 surviving children produced 23 grandchildren and at least 46 great-grandchildren. Beyond that, the number of her descendants is unknown but probably now totals hundreds who have scattered across Australia and further afield. Some of them might be aware of their Arkell-McNeil heritage but most will be ignorant of who she and Donald were. That's to be expected because comparatively few people can name all their eight great-grandparents.

Various stories about Margaret Louisa have survived. One tells of the difficult relationship she had with her unmarried sister-in-law, Annie McNeil. Annie's nieces, Donald's and Margaret Louisa's daughters, remembered Annie as an increasingly eccentric, 'spoilt, complaining woman', who made heavy demands of their mother. Eventually, Margaret Louisa would move out of the family home whenever Annie came to stay. After Annie died in 1940, she was buried in the same grave as Donald and Margaret Louisa in the Brighton Cemetery. This annoyed at least one of the nieces who resented the trouble Annie had caused for the gentle, sweet-natured Margaret Louisa.

As seen, Margaret Louisa died in the family home, 'Andover' in Brighton, on 2 March 1926 at age 67 after suffering from nephritis and syncope for five years. She was buried in the Brighton Cemetery by the Rev. Karl Forster, the Minister at St Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church, which the family attended. Her death was said to have been hastened by grief over the loss 17 months earlier of her second daughter, Flora (Mrs MacNab), at the age of 37. Flora, who was my wife Margaret's grandmother, is discussed in a later section. Margaret Louisa was buried in the same grave as Flora; as mentioned, Donald was later buried there too. On our various visits to the Brighton Cemetery over the years, we've made a point of visiting the grave to lay flowers there in memory of Margaret's maternal grandmother and great-grandparents, none of whom she ever knew.

Many photos of Margaret Louisa have survived. Through them we can trace her life from pre-adolescent girl, teenager and young mother through middle age and finally premature old age. All convey the impression of a serene, self-contained woman.

Grandparents

We now turn to Margaret's four grandparents, only two of whom she met: her father's parents. The other pair, her mother's parents, died 11 and 24 years before she was born.

1. William Henry Vale IV (1875–1947)

We met Margaret's paternal grandfather, William Henry Vale IV, in Section 7 (j) above. As indicated there, he was the oldest of his parents' eight children.

My information in this section derives from the genealogical record, various Vale family documents and notes of discussions with my late father-in-law, William ('Bill') Henry Vale V.

William IV, as I'll now call him, followed his father into mining. He became a mining engineer, mine manager, mine owner and gold mine developer. He was born in Wandiligong on 1 May 1875 and died in Richmond, Melbourne, on 10 December 1947.

William IV received his schooling in the local government school in Wandiligong. His first permanent salaried job was at age 16 in the silver-lead mines at Zeehan on Tasmania's west coast. He subsequently worked in various mines in Victoria and New South Wales before taking his first mine manager's position at age 21. That was back home in Wandiligong, where in 1896 he became the manager of the London & Redruth Company.

A bewildering series of appointments followed over the next six years. He was the 'accountant and assayer' at the United Bros. Gold Mine in Glen Wills, on the remote upper Mitta Mitta River between Mitta Mitta (the town) and Omeo in north-eastern Victoria. Next he was the 'amalgamator' of the West Sunlight Mines at Hillgrove, east of Armidale in north-eastern New South Wales. He then managed the King Golden Gate Mine at Mathinna in north-eastern Tasmania. After that he managed the Duke of York Mine at Bamgamie near Meredith (between Geelong and Ballarat). His big step upwards came in November 1902 when he moved to Walhalla, in the Great Dividing Range north of Morwell, to manage the North Long Tunnel Mine. Other jobs took him to Dargo, Egerton, Kyneton, Maldon and Bendigo in Victoria, then Kalgoorlie and Southern Cross in Western Australia.

Among William IV's surviving documents is a series of references written for him by the mine owners and companies he worked for. These include statements from the Lyell Tharsis Mining Co., the Latrobe Valley Alluvial Coy., the Sunlight Gold Mining Mining Co., the Glen Gold Mining Company, the John Godkin Dundas Silver Mining Company, the Diamond Drill Company, the London & Redruth Gold Mining Company and the Mammoth Quartz Mining Company. One of these references typically commended him in these terms:

> I have for many years known Mr W.H. Vale as a practical Miner and Mining Engineer, and have entrusted to him the erection of Winding, Pumping and Battery Engines, and the conduct of extensive mining operations. Mr Vale's qualifications as a Mine Manager and Engineer have invariably been favourably commented upon and entitle him to seek for any appointment in which Mining Experience and a knowledge of Machinery is indispensable. For the position of Mining Manager he is well qualified, having in his favour educational ability, temperate habits and general good conduct….

Meanwhile, William IV had married Emma Elizabeth Grenness of Wandiligong, who was 7 months older than him. As they had both grown up in Wandiligong, they must have attended the local school together and perhaps had sat in the same class. They were married in Metz, a mining settlement between Armidale and Hillgrove in north-eastern New South Wales, on 2 June 1900. Both gave their ages as 25; his occupation was 'assayer' and hers was 'school teacher'. The marriage ceremony was performed with Anglican rites by the Rev. Lionel P. Nye. It took place in the private residence of one William Henry Vale of Metz. This was either William IV's home or perhaps that of his father, William III. The reason for thinking it was the latter was that a 'W.H. Vale' was a witness to the marriage. William IV could hardly have been the witness at his own marriage; and his father was the only other W.H. Vale currently extant, so perhaps both father and son had taken jobs together at the nearby West Sunlight Mines.

William IV's and Emma Elizabeth's marriage produced three children: Gladys Annie (known as 'Nance', 1902–1979), later Mrs Allen, born in Walhalla; Betty Adele (1908–1986), later Mrs Hartley and subsequently Mrs Fletcher, born in Southern Cross, Western Australia; and William Henry V (1912–1986), born in Maldon in the central Victorian goldfields.

During the family's time in Southern Cross, William IV went into partnership with four other miners to work on a promising ore face. The expected value of the lode was £100,000 or about $16.89 million in present values. The lode ended after only 30 centimetres, however. His son, William V, later remarked that that had been his greatest folly as a 'gambler in gold'. It was also the beginning of his financial difficulties, which plagued him and Emma Elizabeth for the rest of their marriage.

William IV then quit Western Australia to take over the management of the South German Mine in Maldon. In its heyday in the 1880s, the South German had been one of Victoria's largest gold producers, but by the time William IV became manager it was in its last years. It closed in 1918 after the shaft flooded. William V was born while the family was living in Maldon.

After Maldon, perhaps about 1913–1914, William IV took a break from mining to try farming. He bought a property at Leitchville, 262 kilometres north of Melbourne, near the Murray River between Cohuna and Gunbower. He ran the property with two of his younger brothers, Fred and Frank, who were respectively aged 27 and 25. He moved to the farm with Emma Elizabeth and their three children. Unable to resist the call to mining, however, he left his family and his brothers to run the farm so he could return to Western Australia, to Kalgoorlie.

One incident 'young Bill', William V, remembered from his boyhood in Leitchville was the time his father shot a snake under his bed. This frightened young Bill so much he was left with a stammer, which took years to overcome.

In 1916, both Fred and Frank enlisted in the Army, leaving Emma Elizabeth to run the farm alone. William IV had to return from Kalgoorlie. He continued working the property until the end of World War I. The family then left the farm. Emma, Betty and young Bill moved to Kyneton, south-east of Maldon near Woodend; Nance was boarding at the Penleigh Ladies' College in Essendon; and William IV went back to Tasmania to take charge of timber

cutting and bridge maintenance for the West Coast Railway between Queenstown and Strahan.

After Kyneton, the family moved back to Western Australia where William IV managed mines around Kalgoorlie and Southern Cross. Most were exploratory and none was very successful. As well as mining, William IV tried to enter politics. He stood as an independent and campaigned strongly. Emma Elizabeth helped by travelling up and down the railway lines of the huge Kalgoorlie electorate canvassing votes for him at each sstation. He lost narrowly by only 10 votes.

During this period Nance trained as an accountant and Betty as a teacher. Young Bill, William V, attended the Kalgoorlie Primary School, the Kalgoorlie High School and the Kalgoorlie School of Mines, where he trained as a mining metallurgist and industrial chemist. Betty taught in various bush schools then in December 1929 married William Henry (Bill) Hartley Snr. (1905–c.1983), an immigrant motor mechanic and fitter from Handcross in Sussex, who was farming at Southern Cross. In 1933 Hartley was gaoled for selling wheat privately instead of through his bank to pay off his mortgage; this was deemed to be 'theft'. He spent a fortnight in the Southern Cross lockup before his father-in-law, William IV, arranged for his release through the intercession of a politician friend.

Bill Hartley returned the favour the next year, 1934, by saving his father-in-law's life. By this stage both the Vales and Hartleys were in Bendigo, where they spent the next three years. William IV and Hartley worked together at the South New Moon Mine, which William V was managing. William IV had gone down a shaft on a rope to rescue a miner overcome by poison gas, but he, too, succumbed. Hartley then descended the shaft with a bottle of oxygen, breathing from it on the way down. He hitched a rope to his father-in-law and the other chap and had them hauled to the surface. For this action he was awarded the Royal Humane Society Certificate of Merit. Not surprisingly, William IV and Bill Hartley became firm friends.

After returning to Western Australia with Betty and their son in 1936, Bill Hartley worked in various mines as an engineer. He enlisted in the RAAF in August 1940. He rose to flight sergeant during his six years' RAAF service, which included time overseas in Egypt and the UK. He and Betty separated in 1940 soon after his enlistment. She subsequently gained a teaching job at St Peter's College in Adelaide, South Australia's most exclusive boys' school. They divorced after his discharge from the RAAF in 1946; in 1947 she married Christie William Fletcher, a Canadian, then moved with him to Sydney.

Bill Hartley and Betty had one child, William (Bill) Henry Hartley Jnr. (1930–2006). After service in the RAAF, Bill Jnr. became heavily involved in Labor, trade union and left-wing politics. He was secretary of the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party 1963–1970 as a prominent member of the 'socialist-left' faction. He subsequently worked as a journalist and broadcaster. In 1975 he earned the nickname 'Baghdad Bill' for his involvement in an unsuccessful scheme to obtain funds for the Labor Party from Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party government in Iraq.

William IV and Emma Elizabeth retired to Toorak in Melbourne during the early years of World War II, perhaps about 1940. They had little money and lived in rented accommodation in what is best described as genteel penury. They were both about 65 by then. Presumably they had some contact with their surviving siblings who had settled in Melbourne.

William IV's last mining venture was at Argalong, among the mountains 21 kilometres south-east of Tumut in southern New South Wales. It was on a back road that eventually crosses the Brindabella Range and leads to Canberra. He didn't manage the mine personally but employed various friends to conduct its operations. At the time of his death he was still running this mine, which the family retained for some years.

Of William IV's five grandchildren, only Margaret would now remember him; and she has only two memories, both from 1947 when she was only six. The first is of the time William IV and Emma Elizabeth visited William V and his family in their house at 11 Edgar Street, North Brighton, for the only time together. Margaret knew neither of them, but Emma introduced herself and her husband by saying to her three little granddaughters — Penny (age 8), Margaret (6) and Susan (4) — something like, "I am your grandmother and this man is your grandfather." Margaret recalls that he was wearing a conventional dark, wide-lapelled striped men's suit of the era, and a grey trilby hat, which most older men also wore. He did not greet his granddaughters, nor give them a kiss or hug.

Margaret's second memory is of being in Prince Henry's Hospital at the same time as her grandfather. She was there for about a week while her mysteriously high temperature was being investigated. He was there being treated for cancer. He died soon afterwards on 10 December 1947 at the age of 72 years and 7 months. He was buried in his parents' grave in the Box Hill Cemetery.

Only one photo of the mature William IV has survived. A formal studio portrait, it shows a slim, thoughtful, self-assured looking chap in late middle age. He has a full head of greying hair and is dressed in a well-cut, dark striped suit jacket, pin-striped light shirt and diagonally striped tie. He looks directly and confidently at the camera.

2. Emma Elizabeth Grenness (1874–1972)

As seen in Section 4 above, Emma Elizabeth Grenness was born in Growler's Creek (later called Wandiligong) on 13 October 1874, the 11th of the 13 children and third of three daughters of John Robert Grenness and his wife Martha (née Payne). When her father deserted his family and disappeared without trace in late 1889, she would have been 14 or 15 and a pupil teacher at the local Wandiligong Primary School.

I'll refer to Emma by her two given names, Emma Elizabeth, because that's what Margaret has always called her. Margaret also calls her 'Grandma', but interchangeably with 'Emma Elizabeth'.

Emma Elizabeth proved to be a highly proficient teacher. When she was 16½, the District Inspector wrote that she was 'an earnest-minded, teachable girl who will make a good teacher if properly trained'. She spent several periods as acting head teacher in nearby one-teacher schools. In April 1897 at age 22 she was appointed as the permanent head teacher of State School No. 1663 at Brookside on the Buckland River near Porepunkah. Brookside was 17 kilometres from Wandiligong, so she possibly boarded locally and returned home at the weekend. Later that year the District Inspector wrote that he was 'very favourably impressed with her style of work'. She remained at Brookside for almost three years.

Emma Elizabeth's next known move was down to Melbourne in 1900 so that she could attend Melbourne Teachers' College, on the corner of Elizabeth and Grattan Streets, Carlton, adjacent to the University of Melbourne. Known simply as the 'Training College', it was a residential institution. It had opened in 1889 but closed again in 1893 because of the great economic depression of the 1890s. It reopened in 1900, the year that Emma Elizabeth enrolled there. Attending the college would have enabled her to obtain a formal qualification in Education; however, she probably spent only one term there because she resigned from the Education Department on 25 May 1900.

Eight days later, 2nd June, she was 1293 kilometres away from Melbourne in Metz in north-eastern New South Wales being married to William Henry Vale IV. Probably none of her family were present for the wedding because the witnesses were her father-in-law and a chap called Peter Jones — that is, no Grennesses and no bridesmaid.

Henceforth Emma Elizabeth's life for the next 40 years was that of the itinerant miner's wife. As seen, William IV moved from one mining job to another every couple of years throughout that time. She never lived in a home that she could call her own because no sooner had they settled somewhere than they were off to the next location and mine manager's job. Sometimes Emma Elizabeth accompanied her husband; at other times, as in Leitchville and Kyneton, she was left to care for their children and home-of-the-moment while he pursued job opportunities elsewhere.

As mentioned, William Henry IV and Emma Elizabeth produced three children, as follows:

1) Gladys Annie (1902–1979), always known as 'Nance', was born at Walhalla. As seen, she was a boarder at Penleigh Ladies' College in Essendon and later trained in accountancy. Nance married later in life, about 1945, when she would have been 43. Her husband was the chap for whom she had been secretary, Alfred ('Alf') James Allen (1892–1981), the proprietor of Tarac, a South Australian firm that manufactured tartaric acid, a by-product of the wine industry. He was a widower with two adult children. Nance and Alf visited us in Lae in 1968 soon after we'd moved there. They were on a tour, revisiting places where he'd served with the Army during World War I.

2) Betty Adele (1908–1986), as seen, was married first (in 1929) to William Henry Hartley and second (in 1947) to Christie William Fletcher, a banker who had come to Australia with the Canadian Air Force (birth year unknown–1992).

   Christie had a son by a previous marriage but refused to acknowledge that Betty, too, had a son, Bill Hartley Jnr. Sadly, that in turn meant that Betty severed her links with her son. Bill was 17 when she married Christie. Rejected by his mother, he remained in close contact with his grandmother, Emma Elizabeth, who was by now widowed. Bill also retained his links with his uncle William Henry Vale V. As he became more politically radical, however, he severed those ties.

   Christie later managed the firm Commercial and General Acceptance, the finance company of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney. He and Betty lived in exclusive Vaucluse until his retirement, when they relocated to Bowral in the southern tablelands of New South Wales. After Betty's death, he asked Margaret to dispose of her effects, mainly clothing and jewellery. We travelled up to Bowral to take possession of them from Christie. Betty was an elegant woman of great style and taste. She had 'class'. Her clothes and jewellery were of course elegant 'top of the range'. Margaret retained several items then distributed the rest among her sisters and their daughters.

   Emma Elizabeth did not get along well with her first son-in-law, Bill Hartley Snr. She probably thought Betty could have done better than marry a motor mechanic-turned miner, especially one who had served time in prison for theft. Not surprisingly, she approved of Christie Fletcher, thinking that Betty had correctly married at her own level the second time round.

   A later chapter tells how Betty and Christie spent a memorable day with us in Canterbury, England, in 1974.

3) William Henry Vale V (1912–1986), industrial chemist, married Flora Jessie ('Sandy') MacNab (1915–1988), mothercraft nurse, on 29 October 1938 in St Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church, Brighton. They became Margaret's parents and are accordingly discussed in a later section.

Emma Elizabeth was a woman of commanding presence and forceful intellect. Until her eyesight failed her in her mid-90s she read the Melbourne *Age* newspaper from cover to

cover each day and was accordingly well informed about current events. She often visited her son, William V, and his family on Sunday for a dinner of roast lamb. He would collect her from her unit in Glen Iris then take her home again afterwards.

'Sandy' Vale and her children dreaded these occasions because almost inevitably Bill and his mother would get into an acrimonious political debate at the dinner table. She was instinctively conservative; he was 'left-liberal'; and each was fond of winning an argument. I was present for a couple of these debates and was both perplexed and embarrassed to see mother and son verbally tearing at each other.

On the other hand, 'Grandma' seemed pleased with the marriages that her three granddaughters made — Penny to Tom Roberts (a doctor) in 1961, Margaret to me (a teacher) in 1962, and Susan to David Sherrard (a builder) in 1964. She attended all our weddings; then, as our children began arriving, she took an interest in her expanding brood of great-grandchildren, 14 of them eventually. We used to take our three children to meet her on our annual trips home from Papua New Guinea, by which time she was in full-time care in a nursing home in Hawthorn Road, Caulfield. Her eyesight was failing but she was still mentally alert. She seemed glad that we hadn't forgotten her and wished her to see her three Willis great-grandchildren again.

Emma Elizabeth died at age 98 on Christmas Day 1972. Several days later she was buried with Anglican rites in the same grave as her husband and his parents in the Box Hill Cemetery.

'Grandma' sometimes spoke about her girlhood in Wandiligong. We didn't know it then, but she was deceiving us, laying a smoke screen to obscure her origins. She told us that she was the youngest child and the only girl in a large family of boys. She said she hadn't known her father well because he was a sea captain who sailed the world. His Grenness surname derived from Cap Gris Nez, the prominent headland between Calais and Boulogne in France. His ship was lost at sea when she was an infant. And so on.

None of this was true because we now know that her father, John Robert Grenness (born Field), was a cobbler and prospector who speculated in gold mines along the Ovens Valley around Wandiligong. To escape his creditors, he deserted his large family in late 1889 when Emma Elizabeth was 15 and a pupil teacher. J.R. Grenness was never heard of again.

For whatever reason, 'Grandma' had been dissembling. As a result, the false trail she laid succeeded for a time in distracting us family historians.

The pity here was that her own true story was more interesting and creditable than what she fabricated. She was a bright, ambitious girl who was a good student and then an outstanding teacher. Given the responsibility of running several bush schools in her late teens and early 20s, at age 22 she was appointed to a permanent position as head teacher at her own school. She proved she was so capable that her employer, the Education Department, chose her to receive the best advanced teacher training then available, at Melbourne Teachers' College. If she hadn't left her teaching career to marry, her prospects for advancement would have been excellent.

Various photos of Emma Elizabeth survive, mostly from her old age. They show her as a tall, erect woman with short, curly, steely-grey hair. Earlier, she had worn her hair long, coiling it into a single plait that she wound around her head. She was an impressive figure. If she could have known that, 52 years after her death, I'd be writing this, she might not have been amused. But perhaps she'd have been pleased to know she was being remembered with respect and affection.

3. William John MacNab (1876–1930)

William ('Bill') MacNab, Margaret's maternal grandfather, was probably named after his father's oldest brother, William MacNab, who was born at Kilarrow, Islay, in 1820. As seen, Bill himself was born at Tabilk, on 28 April 1876. Little is known of his early life, but presumably he went to the local school then worked at 'Islay Vale' helping his father and brother, James and Malcolm MacNab, run the farm. He was only 15 when his father died in 1891, so thereafter he and Malcolm would have run the farm under the watchful eye of their mother, Mary (née McDonald).

Bill MacNab re-entered the historical record on 8 June 1910 when he married Flora Cameron Georgina Morrow McNeil of 'Colonsay', Warragul, in Scots Church, Melbourne. That was where his parents had married 50 years earlier. At the time of his marriage he was 34 and his bride was 23.

Melbourne *Punch* newspaper reported the wedding at length, with a photograph of the bride and groom in their wedding finery. Two clergymen presided: the Revs. Hugh Buntine and J. Downey. The best man and groomsman were Messrs G.J. Blayney (a neighbour at Tabilk) and Charles McNeil (the bride's older brother). The bridesmaids were Misses Marion McNeil (the bride's younger sister) and Minnie MacNab (the groom's younger sister). The wedding reception took place in the Federal Palace Hotel, at the eastern end of Collins Street. (That was where Margaret and I dined out in style to celebrate our engagement in 1961.) Some 80 guests attended. Numerous speeches were delivered; toasts were proposed and drunk; and meanwhile Di Gilio's stringed orchestra 'played a delightful program of music'. At the end of it all, the newlyweds departed for a honeymoon in Sydney.

Over the next ten years the marriage produced six children, as follows: (1) Una Isabel Mary (1911–2002, later Mrs Brown)); (2) Leila Margaret Islay (1913–2007, later Mrs Middlin); (3) Kenneth James Hamilton (1914–2006); Flora Jessie (1915–1988, 'Sandy', later Mrs Vale); (5) Nancy Jean (born 1917, later Mrs Miller); and (6) Malcolm Douglas (1920–2012).

In February 1915 Bill joined the Army, hoping to serve overseas with the Australian Imperial Force. He had already spent three years as a part-time soldier in the Victorian Mounted Rifles, a militia unit. He was assigned to the AIF's 22nd Infantry Battalion but then discharged as medically unfit only five months later. The reason for that was an old wrist injury, a poorly set double fracture of the ulna and radius bones. This must have embarrassed him because a week later the *Nagambie Times* newspaper published a letter-to-the-editor he had submitted. He said he was writing to refute rumours that he had been discharged because of misconduct. He pointed out that he had been classified as medically unfit because of his wrist injury and for having suffered pneumonia twice since enlisting. But for those health problems, he wrote, 'I would now be beside my comrades in the Dardanelles'. He then applied for the 'Rejection Badge' issued to dischargees like him. The badge publicly demonstrated that the wearer wasn't a shirker.

The marriage ended sadly within five years. Bill began drinking heavily. He used to binge drink, remaining sober for months but then going on a bender. He tried giving up the grog but continued returning to it periodically.

After one such lapse in early 1920, by which time he had five children and Flora was pregnant with the sixth, she moved from 'Islay Vale' to Whittlesea with her children. Why Whittlesea? Perhaps she had friends or relatives there. Whatever the reason, she contacted her parents in Brighton to say that 'Bill has started drinking again'.

Flora's mother, Margaret Louisa McNeil, took a cab to travel the 71 kilometres between Brighton and Whittlesea. She collected her daughter and the five grandchildren then brought them back to 'Andover', the family home in Church Street. Donald McNeil soon bought a

house for them at 10 Collins Street, a kilometre away from 'Andover'. (The house is still standing.) There she raised her children as a sole parent until her death four years later.

Bill MacNab attempted a reconciliation with Flora several times, and she was willing; however, her father was unforgiving. Donald McNeil forbade Flora from having anything more to do with her husband, then, after Flora's death on 11 November 1924, he refused Bill access to the children. Whatever Bill's faults, this was harsh treatment, both for him and his children. The older children grew up remembering him only vaguely; the younger ones could hardly remember him at all; and the youngest, Malcolm, born in Brighton on 3 March 1920 after the separation, never saw him. Malcolm was never allowed to meet his father.

Bill MacNab died almost 5½ years after Flora, on 2 May 1930. His death occurred in Mambourin Street, Werribee. An autopsy at the city morgue in Melbourne the next day revealed that the cause of death was 'impacted food in the pharynx', meaning he had choked. His death certificate gave his age as 47 but he was 54. He was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery two days later. Whether any members of his family or friends were present is unknown.

Bill's McNeil sisters-in-law remembered him as a genial, hard-working farmer. They enjoyed staying with him and Flora on their holidays at 'Islay Vale'. His one surviving portrait, his wedding photograph, shows him as a fine-featured chap. He is unsmiling, pensive in his formal morning suit. He is seated with Flora standing beside him. She, too, is unsmiling, looking at the camera sombrely. They do not seem to be enjoying the occasion.

3. Flora Cameron Georgina Morrow McNeil (1887–1924)

As seen, Flora was born in 'Hillgrove', Brook Street, Hawthorn on 5 October 1887. She was the fourth surviving child and second of seven daughters in the family of 14 children of Donald and Margaret Louisa Arkell. She would have been named for her Arkell grandmother, Flora née Cameron.

We know little about Flora's early life. She was born in Hawthorn, during the period when her parents were living there. Presumably, she went to school in Warragul, where her childhood was spent. She wouldn't have had the benefit of a boarding school education like her brothers did at Scotch College, because the expectation of the daughters of the family was that they would marry and bear children. Not all of them did, however. Jessie Jane, the fourth daughter remained single; Marion, the fifth, married late at 43 and had no children; and Margaret, the sixth, trained as a nurse, married later and had only one child. (Margaret's daughter, Alison Hutton-Wilson, born 1943, has spent most of her life in England, where Margaret settled after her marriage).

Flora possibly met Bill MacNab through the Scottish and Presbyterian family network extending across the area north of Melbourne between Whittlesea, Campbellfield and Nagambie. Many of the Scottish-Australian families of this district were known to each other,

One thing we do know about Flora was that she was the family's redhead. She had deep red auburn hair. Perhaps the family had other redheads in previous generations, but if so I haven't heard of any. Certainly in the generations that followed, redheads have kept appearing. They include Margaret herself and our daughter Catherine ('Katie'). I'm very proud of that because it means I carry the redhead gene too; so does my younger brother, David, who has a redhaired granddaughter, Takisha.

Flora's story is very sad. After her marriage, she and Bill lived in a cottage beside the bank of the Tabilk lagoon behind the 'Islay Vale' homestead. Four of her six children were born there: Leila, Kenneth, Flora and Nancy. Her firstborn, Una, was born in Warragul, so presumably she went back to her parents' home, 'Colonsay', for the birth. Malcolm, the last

child, was born in Brighton after his parents had separated. She was pregnant for 4½ years of the 10 years she lived with Bill.

At 'Islay Vale' she lived under the collective watchful eye — if not domineering influence — of her mother-in-law and four spinster sisters-in-law. The latter are said to have been jealous of her. For a young woman who'd led a sheltered life at home in faraway Warragul surrounded and supported by her own large family, starting a new life on the MacNab estate cannot have been easy.

After only 4½ years of marriage, her husband went off to join the Army and fight overseas in World War I. He left her with three little children, aged 3½, 2 and 11 months, and pregnant with the fourth. As seen, he was discharged as medically unfit after only five months. He came home resentful that his Army service had been terminated 'through no fault of my own' (as he wrote in a letter to the *Nagambie Times* newspaper). His binge drinking and probable descent into alcoholism was perhaps one aspect of his response to rejection by the Army. That in turn led to Flora's decision to leave him and take their children, who never saw him again.

Following the separation, Flora's father denied her wish to be reunited with her husband. She then lived as a sole parent, struggling to raise her six young children, one of whom was born after her move to Brighton. (As seen, her father installed them in a house he'd bought for them at 10 Collins Street.) She also had to contend with the stigma of having failed at marriage at a time when society strongly disapproved of separation and divorce. According to one family tradition, a local doctor wished to marry her, but she declined his offer.

Flora lived little more than four years after her separation from Bill MacNab. She died at age 37 in a private hospital in Marriage Road, East Brighton, on 11 November 1924, 'Remembrance Day'. The cause of death was pneumonia and asthma, from which she had been suffering for two weeks. She was buried the next day in the Brighton Cemetery after a funeral service conducted by the Rev. Karl Forster, the minister at St Cuthbert's Presbyterian church (only 200 metres from her home in Collins Street). As mentioned, her parents and Aunt Annie were later buried in the same grave.

Flora's mother, Margaret Louisa Arkell–McNeil, probably grieved for her the most. Flora had been the first of the McNeil children to marry and was the first to produce grandchildren for her and Donald. She survived Flora by less than 17 months. Her family believed her death had been hastened by Flora's sad end.

Margaret's mother, Flora Jessie ('Sandy') Vale (née MacNab), always remembered the day of her mother's death. While their mother was in hospital, the six MacNab children, who ranged in age from 12 down to 4, lived at their McNeil grandparents' home, 'Andover' in Church Street. The day their mother died, they were all sent up the back yard to the stable, which faced Black Street at the rear of the house. They weren't sure why they were there until their aunt Sylvia McNeil joined them to say that their mother had died.

After that, the children's future had to be decided. They couldn't be given back to their father because he'd been banished from their lives. What the McNeil and MacNab families did with them was to divide them between their grandparents and various aunts and uncles of both families. The aunts and uncles would then be responsible for their upbringing. Una remained with her grandparents at 'Andover' but was later cared for by her aunt Marion McNeil (who married James Martin Swan in 1932). Leila and Malcolm went to Alice Batchelor (née MacNab); however, Malcolm was later sent to 'Islay Vale' to his Uncle Malcolm and Aunts Flora, Chrissie and Jessie MacNab because they thought his health would improve if he lived in the country. Kenneth went to Charles McNeil in Warragul. Flora ('Sandy') was initially sent to her uncle Reg McNeil and his wife Muriel, but then boarded at a Catholic convent school in Warragul. She later lived with her grandparents in Brighton but

was subsequently assigned to her aunt Jessie Jane McNeil in Brighton. Nancy went to her aunt Minnie Roberts (née MacNab) in Numurkah.

This was a strange arrangement, with different outcomes for each of the six children. Some fared better than others. Flora Jessie was shunted around more than any of the others. Kenneth's life was also hard. He became a poorly paid menial labourer for his Warragul uncles until he joined the Army for overseas service soon after the outbreak of World War II in 1939. (He served in the Middle East and Greece before being taken prisoner of war in Greece in May 1941. He spent the next four years in POW camps in Germany.)

The main effect for the children of being distributed far and wide among their aunts and uncles was that they grew up having little contact with each other. While their father was still alive, their McNeil and MacNab aunts and uncles cooperated with each other in ensuring that he had no dealings with them.

On one occasion Leila and Malcolm were at their Aunt Alice Batchelor's house in Balaclava when a chap they didn't know came down the side path then stared at them intently through the living room window. When they told their Aunt Alice about this, they were sent upstairs. She then let him in at the front door. After he'd gone they were allowed back downstairs but weren't told who he was. They guessed it had been their father.

The MacNab children did not reconnect with each other until after they'd all grown up. They all married and had children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of their own. Surprisingly, in adulthood they became a united and loving family. Had their parents known that that's how things would turn out for them, they might have felt some comfort amidst their regrets over their own failures in marriage and parenthood.

Only two photographs of the mature Flora McNeil-MacNab have survived in our branch of their large extended family. One is her 1910 wedding portrait; the other shows her with her mother and sisters the year after her marriage. She smiles in neither of them but faces the camera solemnly. Each image shows her with a thick head of wavy hair parted in the middle.

Parents

1. William Henry Vale V (1912–1986)

William Henry ('Bill') Vale V, was Margaret's father and my father-in-law. He was born in Maldon in the central Victorian goldfields on 28 November 1912. He didn't live there long because within about a year his parents moved to their farm at Leitchville in northern Victoria. He began school in Leitchville but after little more than a year, when he was 6, he transferred to the Kyneton state school. One of his memories from that time was shaking the hand of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) when the Prince visited Kyneton during his 1920 Royal Tour of Australia. (The experience didn't make a royalist of him.) He remained at the Kyneton school until about 1921 or 1922, when the family moved to the Western Australian goldfields. As seen, his father was managing various mines around Kalgoorlie and Southern Cross.

In Western Australia young Bill was sent first to the Kalgoorlie primary school and then on to the local high school. While attending these schools he lived in various boarding houses which had been approved by the Education Department for out-of-town students like him. After his secondary schooling he went on to the Kalgoorlie School of Mines (now the 'WA School of Mines: Minerals, Energy and Chemical Engineering' of Curtin University). He completed a professional course there, perhaps a diploma-level qualification, in mining metallurgy and industrial chemistry. He would have completed this by the end of 1932 when he would have just turned 20.

Bill's childhood must have been difficult because of the family's frequent changes of location as his father pursued his mine manager's career. He could have seen little of his father, who periodically vanished from the scene.

What jobs Bill Vale undertook after graduating from the School of Mines is uncertain. Perhaps he worked for a while in the mining industry in Kalgoorlie before returning to Victoria when his family did in 1933–1934. He took various industrial chemists' jobs in Melbourne. One of these was with Leggo's, the food and condiments manufacturing firm founded in Bendigo in 1894. While working, he undertook further job-related education, in industrial microbiology, at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Through his training Bill became a proficient physicist and mathematician as well. He was really a scientific polymath who was interested in all branches of science. Special interests were microscopy and astrophysics.

At some point in the mid–late 1930s Bill met and courted Flora Jessie ('Sandy') MacNab, who was a mothercraft nurse working at the Presbyterian Babies' Home in Camberwell. Their wedding took place in St Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church in Brighton on Saturday 29 October 1938. He was 25 but would turn 26 a month later; she was 22 but would have her 23rd birthday the very next day. He gave his address as 61 Leopold Street, South Yarra; hers was 30 Middle Crescent, Brighton, which meant she was living with her Aunt Jessie Jane McNeil at the time.

The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Karl Forster, who by now had baptised, married and buried various members of the bride's extended family. The best man was David Francis Phillipson (1911–1992) and the bridesmaid was Sandy's older sister, Una, who the previous year had married Cyril Brown. David Phillipson, who must have been one of Bill's friends, was a business manager and auctioneer in Kyneton. Perhaps they had been schoolmates there in the early 1920s. Until I wrote this, Margaret had never heard of David Phillipson, so perhaps he and Bill lost contact afterwards. (Phillipson later served in the RAAF for six years during and after World War II.)

Bill and Sandy honeymooned by driving north to visit his father's mine at Argalong, in the mountains beyond Tumut. (The mine was later managed by Bill's friend Geoffrey Edgar Moorhouse (1913–1993), who joined the Army during World War II, managed the mine thereafter and then became an Anglican vicar.) On the way home, they had to drive through a bushfire near Tumut. After their marriage they lived in Oakleigh with Sandy's second sister and her husband, Leila and Frank Middlin. Their first child, Penelope, was born during their time with the Middlins; however, soon after that they moved to a rented duplex at 11 Edgar Street, North Brighton. That was to remain their home for the next 23 years, until shortly before Margaret and I married. They then moved to Victoria Street, Sandringham, for about a year before buying their first house at 17 Walstab Street, East Brighton. That remained their home for another 15 years until they moved to 121A Cranbourne Road, Frankston, in 1978. They lived there for the next eight years until Bill's death in 1986.

Three of Bill's and Sandy's four children were born during their occupancy of the Edgar Street home. Penelope ('Penny') Jane (born 30 October 1939, later Mrs Roberts) was born during their sojourn in Oakleigh; but the others were born in Brighton — Margaret Ann (born 12 April 1941, later Mrs Willis), Susan ('Sue') Elizabeth (born 19 January 1943, later Mrs Sherrard); and William ('Bill') Henry Vale VI (born 10 September 1951; subsequently married and divorced Sue Morton, and then married Leisa Clarke).

Unlike his Hartley and MacNab brothers-in-law, Bill did not join the armed services in World War II. As an industrial chemist, he was in a reserve occupation. He nevertheless contributed to the war effort by undertaking highly secretive research for the Defence Department. His projects included developing a lethal contact poison for use against the Japanese; another was injecting poison into cartons of eggs that were then allowed to fall into

Japanese hands. Such work was so 'hush-hush' that he couldn't talk about it much, even decades later.

During the 1940s and early 50s Bill Vale worked as a metallurgist for Bingham's Steel, a manufacturer of steel products including food-procession machinery. That experience turned his inventive mind to the problems of steel corrosion. Using a backyard laboratory, he developed an easily-applied water-based plastic paint that he called 'Membrane'. 'Membrane' could be applied to exterior surfaces as a protection against water damage and corrosion. About 1953 he patented this product, established a firm called 'Radco (acronym: 'research and development company') Pty Ltd' to manufacture and distribute 'Membrane' from a rented factory in Moorabbin (next suburb south-east of Brighton). The firm did quite well for about 25 years, after securing some major contracts. These included one from the State Electricity Commission to corrosion-proof its statewide network of power transmission pylons. Eventually, however, the major paint companies developed cheaper rival products. Radco's business was probably declining when Bill sold the firm about 1977.

Bill's next venture was a scheme for using the abundant brown coal of Victoria's Latrobe Valley as the source for an agricultural fertiliser that he called 'Humiss'. With financial backing from friends who trusted his inventiveness and skills as an industrial chemist, plus large amounts of money from his and Sandy's life savings, he formed a company called 'SAAP' (another acronym: 'scientific and applied processes'). He succeeded in producing a granular grey-black substance that was not only a fertiliser but promoted healthy soil structure. 'Humiss' showed promise because the source material was cheap and plentiful; it delivered more plant nutrient to the soil than blood-and-bone fertiliser; and it also had a higher water content when 'dry'. Unfortunately, 'Humiss' didn't advance from the research-and-development stage to the mass-manufacturing and marketing phase. By the mid-1980s Bill's declining health prevented him from achieving those goals. The 'Humiss' project effectively died with him.

Bill's death on 29 September 1986 in the Frankston Hospital at age 73 years and 10 months followed a heavy cold, but the cause was emphysema. He had been progressively debilitated by the disease during the previous five or six years. It was a legacy of his heavy smoking. For much of his adult life he'd smoked several packs of cigarettes daily. He'd stopped smoking about 12 years earlier, but by then his lungs had been irreparably damaged. In his last year he had to keep an oxygen cylinder and mask nearby to use when he became short of breath. He was cremated several days later at the Spring Vale Necropolis. We scattered his ashes in parkland on the outskirts of Maldon during a family gathering there several months later.

In his last few years, Bill began writing poetry. He enjoyed reciting his cryptic little poems at family gatherings. After his death I gathered some of them, typed them out and published them in a booklet that I distributed to various members of his extended family. Here's one he jotted down during a visit to stay with us in Canberra:

SCHISM (or cage me a peacock)

We dance together
me and me
Obsessed in dreadful harmony.
Who feels the surge of ecstasy,
thy lover or thine enemy?
the choice is thine our love.

O'er the scattered mystic floor
relentless in our rhythmic sway
One step to each

no less no more
who avoids rejection's door?
the choice is thine our love.

We dance together
me and me,
thy lover or thine enemy.
Thy lover slain who then will weep?
'Tis not thine enemy who sleeps.

Bill was so pleased with this poem that I submitted it to the literary editor of the *Canberra Times* newspaper, which back in those days used to publish original poetry. I don't think it was ever published, but if it had been Bill would have been delighted because he thought he had poetic gifts he wanted others to recognise.

I won't comment on my late father-in-law's personal peccadilloes. He wasn't an easy chap to live with. Despite that, his children, children-in-law and grandchildren loved and respected him greatly. I was as fond of him as I was of my own father. He was kind, generous and supportive of me in my marriage to his second daughter. I greatly enjoyed our long conversations as we sipped 'schooners' of 'black-and-tan' (half-beer, half-stout) or a dram or three of 'Lagavulin' and 'Laphroig' (his favourite single-malt Scotch whiskies, a bottle of which I'd bring with me on our visits from Canberra). I didn't understand what he was talking about, because it was mainly abstruse speculative physics, astronomy and chemistry. I knew absolutely zilch about such subjects but I used to listen attentively because he loved an audience and he deserved my respect.

W.H. Vale V was a tall (6'2": 188 cms.), dark-haired, handsome chap in his younger years. He put on a great deal of weight during early middle age, but he lost that later as he entered his final years. Many photos of him survive in his family's photo albums. Whenever I see them, I'm reminded of what a talented, intellectually precocious, quick witted, gregarious and thoroughly likeable chap he was.

2. Flora Jessie ('Sandy') MacNab (1915–1988)

Flora Jessie MacNab was born on 30 October 1915 in her parent's cottage on the 'Islay Vale' estate at Tabilk. She would have been conceived about the time her father joined the Army; and she was born three months after he had been discharged as medically unfit.

She remained known as Flora within MacNab and McNeil family circles; however, among the people of her own generation she was commonly known as 'Sandy'. Where that nickname came from is unknown. That's what her husband called her, as did her siblings and their children. I'll accordingly refer to her as Sandy from now on.

Sandy had a disrupted and disturbing childhood. She wasn't yet 4½ when her parents separated and had only just turned 9 when her mother died. She began school at the Wilson Street state school, Brighton, only 400 metres from her mother's home in Collins Street. She would have attended the school for 4 years; however, after her mother's death she was sent to Warragul to live with her uncle Reginald McNeil and his wife Muriel. She probably attended the Warragul state school at first, but Muriel resented having Sandy foisted on her and came to dislike and disparage her unwelcome niece-by-marriage. After about a year with Reg and Muriel, Sandy was packed off to the local Catholic convent school, Our Lady of Sion College, as a boarder.

Sandy's main memory of that unhappy time was the harshness of the nuns. As a Presbyterian, she was out of place in such a school. One of her main memories was of the nuns' prudishness. For them, the human body was so shameful that it had to be kept covered

all the time — even in the bath. When the girls took a bath, they had to cover themselves in an all-enveloping sheet-like garment with only one hole for their heads. They carried out their ablutions beneath the sheet while sitting in the bath.

Sandy was subsequently brought back to live in her McNeil grandparents' home in Brighton. She then returned to the Wilson Street school. That, too, was an unhappy experience. Schoolmates scorned her as an 'orphan'. They excluded her from their friendship circles. She felt hurt that she wasn't invited to the birthday parties that the other girls in her class attended. The rigid regime maintained by her grandfather at 'Andover' also caused her grief. The school lunch hour was from 12.15–1.15 p.m., but at Donald McNeil's insistence the family did not sit down for lunch until 1.00 p.m. Meal over, Sandy would run back to school but was always late. She would then be punished.

When Sandy had finished school after 8th grade (the 'Merit Certificate') and after turning 15 in 1930, she was placed 'in service' as a live-in domestic with a Dr and Mrs Joyce in Hawthorn. (This was Dr Arthur Herbert Joyce, who practised in Collins Street, Melbourne.) The Joyces were friends of her aunt Jessie Jane McNeil. Sandy spent 2½ years working for the Joyces before entering full-time live-in training as a mothercraft nurse at the Presbyterian Babies' Home (PBH) in Camberwell. That was about 1933. She had to pay up-front for her uniform and equipment. Having little money of her own, she had to rely on her McNeil relatives. They deducted it from her inheritance, which was a tiny fraction of her grandfather's estate.

After Sandy had finished her training, perhaps 1935, she continued living and working at the PBH for a while. She had developed into a strikingly handsome young woman; and that attracted the unwanted attention of a chap employed at the PBH. She and Bill Vale were 'walking out together' (contemporary idiom) at the time, so she told her would-be suitor about her steady boyfriend. Despite that, he kept pestering her. When she let Bill know, he said, "Let's get married, and then you can quit working there."

After leaving the PBH, Sandy worked for a while in Toorak as the mothercraft nurse for the G.J. Coles family of retail store fame. She and Bill became engaged during this period. A few weeks before their wedding in October 1938, Sandy moved into her aunt Jessie Jane McNeil's unit at 30 Middle Crescent, Brighton. That was the address she gave on her marriage certificate. Jessie Jane (known in Sandy's family simply as 'Aunt Jane') had meanwhile stepped up to become Sandy's surrogate mother. They bonded closely, developing a lifelong affection for each other that was more 'mother-daughter' than 'aunt-niece'. Significantly, Sandy's firstborn daughter, Penelope, was given 'Jane' as a middle name; and all four Vale children grew up regarding their 'Aunt Jane' as a de facto maternal grandmother.

As seen, Sandy married Bill Vale in her family's church, St Cuthbert's, on 29 October 1938 with her oldest sister, Una Brown, as her bridesmaid. Her uncle Jack Barber, husband of her mother's oldest sister, Agnes Isabella ('Aunt Aggie'), walked her down the aisle. After a light lunch at 30 Middle Crescent, the newlyweds left on their honeymoon.

As also mentioned, in their first year of marriage Sandy and Bill lived with Leila and Frank Middlin in Oakleigh, They then moved to Brighton and raised their four children there. Sandy was wife, mother and homemaker. She supported Bill loyally in his various scientific and business endeavours. As well as that, she dutifully aided her parents-in-law during their retirement in Melbourne. Late in life her mother-in-law, the indomitable Emma Elizabeth, paid her a great compliment. "Sandy," she remarked, "you're a brick!"

By the time Bill Vale died, Sandy was already suffering from the dreadful wasting illness that killed her — motor neurone disease. I won't describe its horrible, cruel and inexorable progression. Suffice to say that she survived Bill by only 16 months.

Following Bill's death, her daughter Sue moved from Buderim in Queensland to be with her in her Frankston home. After that, she moved to a cottage in Errard Street, Ballarat, bought with the proceeds of the sale of house in Frankston. Her move there enabled her oldest daughter, Penny Roberts, a geriatric nurse, to support her as she became less and less able to care for herself.

Sandy's last great family occasion was my 50th birthday party at home here in Wanniassa at the end of 1987. Penny and Tom Roberts brought her here by plane. Also with them were their daughter, Alison Roberts, Sandy's oldest grandchild, and Alison's fiancé, Stewart McDonald, who announced their engagement that weekend.

Sandy was very frail and very sad because she knew she had little time left. She nevertheless enjoyed the occasion. She had many members of her family around her, and for her family was all-important. Alison's and Stewart's engagement would have given her additional joy because that promised the continuation of her lineage.

Sandy died a month later, on 31 January 1988 in a hospital-nursing home at 85 Wilson Street, Brighton. (It's now called Epworth Brighton.) Her funeral service took place in St Cuthbert's several days later. Her son, three sons-in-law and two of her seven grandsons ceremonially bore her coffin on their shoulders from the church to the hearse. She was then cremated at the Springvale Necropolis. Her ashes were later scattered in Maldon so that her remains would be near Bill's.

Despite the frequent sadnesses and setbacks of her childhood, Sandy MacNab-Vale grew up to become a gracious, genteel lady. Her personal integrity was self-evident. She had natural poise and grace. She was quiet, reserved and unassuming, but those qualities disguised a sharp, independent mind and a wonderful sense of humour. Her manners and speech were refined, qualities she passed on to her children.

Sandy's main cultural interest was light opera. Whenever she could, she and a friend would attend one of the Melbourne theatres to listen to live performances. They would sit up in the 'gods' (top rows of seats at the back) because that was where the cheapest seats were. On one occasion, about 1962, she won a radio competition by correctly identifying Marian Anderson, the American contralto, as the 'mystery singer' in a quiz.

An abiding aspect of Sandy's life was her great pride in her Scottish heritage. She strongly identified with Scotland, its people and their culture. Her children remember that as they were growing up their mother would leap to her feet and dance a Highland fling whenever she heard bagpipe music. Whatever else might be on TV, the Edinburgh Military Tattoo every New Year's Eve was a 'must-see' program in the Vale household.

In Sandy's last year of life, 1987, she achieved a long-cherished goal, which was to visit Skye to see the land where her McNeil and McDonald ancestors had lived before emigrating to Australia. Penny took her there, but unfortunately Sandy collapsed soon after their arrival and so she had to spend most of her time on Skye in the Portree Hospital. Apart from visiting us in Lae in 1973, it was her one overseas trip.

Sandy's children were the great love of her life. She was fiercely protective of them. She consequently ensured that Penny, Margaret, Sue and Bill all grew up enveloped in the love and security that she had rarely known when she herself was young. They, their spouses and their children owe her much.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have dealt at length with the 30 people populating Margaret's family tree in the four generations preceding hers. My readers can draw their own conclusions about them. As for myself, her forebears have been as much a part of my life as my own ancestors have been in all the time since Margaret and I became boyfriend-and-girlfriend 66 years ago. I feel

I know them well in all their great variety; and I feel fortunate through being linked to them by marriage.

4. CHILDHOOD IN THE 1940S

'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there,' L.P. Hartley (1895–1972), an English novelist, wrote in *The Go-Between* in 1953. The force of Hartley's observation strikes me when I contemplate my childhood in the 1940s. We did things differently back then. It was not only another age, but a different world as well.

Our milk, for example, came unpasteurised, delivered in bulk by a milkman who drove a horse and cart, and arrived by night to fill the billy we left just inside the front gate. Our milk was still being delivered that way in the late 1950s, when sealed milk bottles replaced the milk sloshed into the billy. Our bread, whole loaves, unwrapped and unsliced, was also delivered by horse and cart. Lu Kooey, the Chinese fruiterer, delivered his goods by horse and cart, too. And our garbage was taken away by a horse-drawn dumpster to the municipal 'Destructor' in Centre Road, then incinerated. The cinders were subsequently recycled as road base.

'White' Australia was an alien land, too. Most of us Brightonians were 'Anglo-Celts' — a mix of peoples of British and Irish ancestry. There must have been a few Italian and Jewish families, and inevitably some of German descent too, though if you were you'd keep quiet about it. There were also a few Chinese in Brighton, like Lu Kooey mostly left over from the goldrush era, but, as far as I was aware no Aborigines, Pacific Islanders, Filipinos, Indonesians, Japanese, much less Indians, Africans or Middle Easterners.

Brighton State School

The government primary school I attended for seven years, Brighton or Wilson Street State School, was also another 'foreign country'. It was an institution very different from the schools my grandchildren recently attended here in Canberra. Class sizes were enormous, with 60 or more in some classes. Discipline was harsh, and corporal punishment a daily occurrence. Much of our learning was rote — long sessions of chanting the 'times tables' and spelling lists in unison. The emphasis was heavily on the 'three Rs' of 'reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic', with cultural education — a term never heard of — taking a distant second place. 'Physical education' consisted of the entire school marching class by class, three abreast, around the perimeter of the playground while the school drum band beat the time.

The opening and closing of the morning and afternoon school sessions was signalled by the ringing of the enormous school bell, which hung from its tall wooden gable at one side of the main assembly quadrangle. The bell-ringer, or 'bell monitor', was one of the Grade 6 boys who was rostered for a week's duty before another lad took his place. I felt enormously proud when I took my turn, but, as I soon discovered, there was a knack to bell-ringing. The bell-rope had to be pulled vertically. Any sideways movement would cause the clapper to slide round the bell-mouth with a swishing noise instead of striking it squarely.

Every Monday morning school began with the recitation of the loyal oath. With our right hands over our hearts, we'd turn to face the flagpole and recite the patriotic mantra: *'I love God and my country; I honour the flag; I will serve the King and cheerfully obey my parents, teachers and the laws.'* The boys then saluted with their right hands as the girls stood to attention while the flag — an Australia red ensign — was unfurled to the accompaniment of a drum roll.

Brighton State School, No. 1542 in the Victorian Education Department's numbering system, opened in April 1875. It replaced three earlier local church-run 'common' schools and was founded because under the 'free, secular and compulsory' Education Act of 1872, the government was obliged to provide schools.

By the time I joined the kindergarten class there at the start of the 1943 school year, the school had been running for 68 years. A couple of classmates who went up through the grades with me claimed that their grandparents had been among the 630 inaugural pupils of 1875.

The school occupied (and still occupies) two separate buildings 120 metres apart. The senior school, comprising Grades 3 to 8 in my day, is on the corner of Wilson and Male Streets, with the main entrance on Wilson Street. The junior school, kindergarten to grade 2 was further down the hill and faced Male Street. An invisible line of demarcation separated the senior and junior sections. Each section had its own assembly quadrangles and playgrounds; and the students of the one did not enter the space of the other.

The Bubs

The kindergarten class, always called 'the Bubs' by the student population, was the first of the seven years of primary school in Victoria. I only vaguely remember my first day of school. An online calendar of term dates tells me it would have been Tuesday 2nd February 1943. Mum walked me there then handed me over to the teacher receiving the new intake of 'Bubs'. I then joined about 40 other beginners sitting in a circle playing some kind of ball game, taking turns to bowl a soft ball at a stuffed toy, a rabbit, at the centre.

Most of the rest of that year is a blur. I can't remember who the teacher was, but she was younger than all the others, wore a loose smock (was she pregnant?), and was kind to me. Perhaps I was a 'good' boy, because I seemed to be a favourite. She never growled at me like she did with some others. We spent much time sitting on the carpet in front of the blackboard, where we learned our numbers: a black dot on a chart, •, and the figure '1' meant the number one; two dots, • •, and a '2' meant number two, and so on all the way up to 10. The teacher showed us on the blackboard how to write the figures. We each had a slate and a slate-pencil, and so we then practised writing the figures on our slates. A mistake was easily fixed. You simply licked your finger, erased the error then wrote the correct figure in its place. (The disadvantage of slates was that they'd break if dropped.)

Learning to read and write was similar. We were taught the letters of the alphabet one by one, were told what sound they make, for instance 'a is for axe', 'b is for bat', 'c is for cat', 'd is for dog' and so on. We practised writing them on our slates, and then learned how to put them together sequentially and phonetically to make words — 'ant', 'bag', 'cap', 'dig', 'end', 'fox'.

By the end of the year we knew and could write the numbers to 10. We could count up to 20. We could recite the alphabet, say what sound each letter makes, read and spell simple one-syllable words, and read the early pages of the *First Book*, the Victorian Education Department's Grade 1 reading book, which contained sentences like these: 'I am big. I am six. I can dig and run and hop.' The *First Book* was our only reading material — no library books back then; and indeed no library. It's a wonder any of us ever went on to read independently for pleasure.

At this stage I had no friends. I knew the other boys in my class, and played with many of them in the schoolyard, but none of them was a special friend. One of them, Bill Cross, attended Sunday School with me, and we'd been in Sunday School together before beginning primary school; however, Bill didn't become a friend until 15 years later when we began dating girls who were workmates in the same city office. I was aware of being friendless at school, but that didn't trouble me much because at home my buddy was Barry Weedon, the boy next door.

During my first year of school I also had my first experience of bullying. Michael Guinness, one of the other boys in my class, began pinning me to the school wall beside the

drink bubblers. He'd grab me by my shoulders at play-time (recess), hold me against the wall, making vague but menacing threats about what he'd do to me — 'bash' was the vogue word — if he felt inclined to. He was bigger and stronger than me and I didn't want to be bashed, so, wimpishly, I submitted. That was probably the point of the exercise. I hadn't yet acquired the cheek and combativeness that were later mine, otherwise I'd have stood up to him despite the prospect of a bashing. Michael's older sister, Jan, was a classmate and friend of my older sister Ruth, but that made no difference to Michael, who continued pinning me to the wall at recess until he tired of it. Ironically, within several years we'd become quite good friends and each of us used to invite the other to his birthday party. By then Michael was telling me he liked me because I was always grinning. Grinning as a self-defence strategy? If grinning won friends and spared me a bashing, I'd grin all I could.

1944

The next year, 1944, we moved up from the 'Bubs' to Grade 1. Serious learning now began. We sat in rows of desks, two to a desk. Taught addition and subtraction up to 10, we learnt to manipulate the numbers we'd been taught in kindergarten. We continued reading the *First Book*, which introduced us to rhyming verse:

Happy as a robin, gentle as a dove,
That's the kind of little child
Everyone will love.

Perhaps the moralistic thrust of such verse escaped us, but the passages of text and the spelling list at the back of the book took us to a higher level of linguistic complexity. We learned how various letters could be combined to make other sounds, for instance 'c' and 'h' say 'ch' as in 'chip', 's' and 'h' say 'sh' as in 'shop', 'n' and 'g' say 'ng' as in 'sing', 't' and 'h' say 'th' as in 'this', 'c' and 'k' say 'ck' as in 'sock', and 'q' and 'u' say 'qu' as in 'quilt'. We also learned that 'a' isn't always pronounced 'short' as in 'axe', but if followed by 'r' it becomes 'long' as in 'car' and 'part'; when followed by 'y' as in 'day' and 'stay' it 'says its own name'; it also 'says its own name' when followed by 'consonant + e', as in 'made', 'cake' and 'date'; but when a 'll' follows, it's said as 'or', as in 'ball' and 'small'; and it makes the same sound if followed by a 'w', as in 'paw' and claw'.

The passages for reading reinforced these spelling rules. For instance, 'Lesson 24', which is about the chief protagonist, Tom, feeding his chooks, includes sentences like these to consolidate the 'c' + 'h' combination:

One of my chums, Charlie, said, "May I help you to feed the chicks?" So I let him fetch a can of water.

Accelerated

1944 turned out to be a bad year for me because for reasons best known to herself, the formidable Miss Morrison, the Infant Mistress, i.e. head of junior school, decided mid-year to 'accelerate' the six brightest children in the class. That meant moving them up a class from Grade 1 to Grade 2. I was one of the six, but unlike the other five, I wasn't ready to be accelerated. While I could sound out simple phonetically-spelt one-syllable words, I couldn't read properly; and although I could count to a hundred, I still hadn't got the hang of addition and subtraction and didn't understand that arithmetical calculation isn't the same as reciting all the numbers up to 100.

I floundered in Grade 2. Among children a year older and mostly bigger than myself, and unable to read and do arithmetic, I fell further behind. If asked to read aloud I stammered and stumbled. If quizzed in 'mental arithmetic', I answered wrongly. I soon became the butt

of classmates' cruel humour. I remember that one superior girl, Rosemary, used to point her finger at me and proclaim, "He's so slow he hasn't yet woken up from last night's sleep!"

Amidst this unhappiness was some joy. A couple of months before the school year ended, my second sister, Helen, was born. I stood up the next day during 'morning talk' to announce her birth. The teacher asked me all about her. I can't remember what I said, but I was pleased to be the centre of attention for reasons other than scholastic failure. I also enjoyed going with Dad, Ruth and David to the Brighton Community Hospital to visit Mum and see our new sister. After we three children had spent a few minutes chatting to Mum and admiring Helen, we were allowed outside to play. Dug into the lawn of the hospital's front garden was an air-raid shelter. With the threat of Japanese bombing now long gone, it was being used as a junk-room — an exciting place for curious children to explore. Helen's arrival pleased me greatly for it gave our family a satisfying symmetry: we now had two girls and two boys, which was a good balance.

Unfortunately, the bullying at school ratcheted up. Two boys in particular, Jeffrey Hicks, who lived diagonally opposite the Willis home in Durrant Street, and Keith Short, the doctor's son, who lived in Hampton Street about 150 metres away, used to follow me home; and then when we passed a tall, dense cypress hedge, they'd say, "We're going to teach you a lesson!" The lesson consisted of grabbing me by the sweater then pushing me back until I'd half-disappeared into the stiff foliage. They'd hold me there, generally roughing me up and threatening further violence unless I 'learned' the 'lesson' they were teaching me. I complained about this treatment to my teacher one afternoon before leaving the school. "Jeffrey Hicks is going to bash me up on the way home!" I told her, but she dismissed me with a wave of the hand. Jeffrey was watching this exchange from a distance, but despite that he gave me another 'lesson' that afternoon.

Mendacity

I later had my revenge on Jeffrey, though that was something I never consciously sought. It happened the next year, in Grade 3, after someone had slashed the tyre of a bike in the school bike shed. "Does anyone know anything about this?" the headmaster, Mr Bretherton, asked at morning assembly. I put my hand up, so was instructed to go to his office. A couple of teachers were there with him. He asked me what I knew about the incident. I said I had seen Jeffrey Hicks slit the tyre with a razor blade. Jeffrey was then summoned to the office; and Mr Bretherton asked me to demonstrate on his own bike what Jeffrey had done. I carefully showed how I had seen Jeffrey draw the razor blade along the length of the tyre, slicing it open. My lies were instantly exposed because the tyre had been slashed crosswise not lengthways. Jeffrey and I were both sent back to class; and there the matter rested until the next morning's assembly, when Mr Bretherton announced that Ian Willis in Grade 3 had wrongfully accused Jeffrey Hicks of being the tyre-slasher.

Apart from that, neither Mr Bretherton nor our class-teacher administered any chastisement. No 'cuts' of the headmaster's strap and no detention by the class-teacher. Instead, punishment awaited me at home. As soon as Ruth arrived home from school, she told Mum that "Mr Bretherton told the school that Ian has been telling lies, saying he saw Jeffrey Hicks slashing bike tyres!" There was no escaping the fact that I had broken the ninth Commandment, *'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour!'*; and so, having confessed my falsehoods to Mum, I was marched across the road to the Hicks house, where I was made to apologise to Jeffrey and his mother for having lied about him so blatantly.

I've often wondered in the intervening 79 years what prompted my outrageous action. As a historian, I'm dedicated to 'truth-telling'; I've always been an honest chap; I don't tell lies; and I expect truthfulness from others. Why this aberration then? What on earth

possessed me to stride so boldly into this morass of mendacity? I cannot psychologise the 7-year old boy that was me; but I guess that at the back of my mind was a wish to punish Jeffrey Hicks for the humiliation of the daily 'lesson-teaching' on my way home from school.

Whatever my motive, the bullying stopped. Jeffrey left me alone after that. Perhaps he had learnt that even a feeble, easily frightened small boy could strike back unexpectedly and painfully. I'm reminded here of the motto of Clan Chattan, one of the great tribal confederations of the Scottish Highlands — 'Touch not the cat bot [without] a glove', i.e. don't provoke a Scottish wildcat because if it unsheathes its claws you'll be hurt. Maybe Jeffrey realised he'd unsheathed my claws. The Hicks family moved away from Brighton after this episode. We later heard that they had adopted two Aboriginal children, a most unusual practice at that time. The bullying at school continued for a while because another boy, Terry O'Keefe, much taller than me, picked on me whenever he encountered me in the playground; but eventually that ended too. As for my other tormentor, Keith Short, some nine years later he joined me at Melbourne High School, where we became good friends.

'Dabu'

One of the perplexing aspects of my life at this time was my brother David. We squabbled often, but I was wary about provoking David too far. He had a short fuse, and if he lost his temper he'd pick up whatever was nearest and hurl it at whoever had offended him. On the other hand, he was fiercely loyal and protective of his older brother. He'd rush to my defence, punching, kicking, scratching, biting, if other boys dared attack me. (A pity he wasn't with me when Jeffrey Hicks was teaching me his 'lessons'!)

David also used to follow me to school, so I'd have to yell at him to go home. On one occasion, Mrs Wheate, the wife of the local firewood merchant, saw David following me up Hector Street wearing only his singlet. She came after us and told him to go home lest he 'catch his death of cold'. I stopped to watch the exchange between them. David stood his ground defiantly, pointed to me and said, "That's my big brother!", as if that was the end of the argument. On another occasion he got all the way to the school, but as the morning session had already started, he couldn't find me. Someone saw him wandering along Wilson Street, so took him to the nearby police station. The police asked David who he was. The best he could say was ,"I Dabu Charles Willis", but that was enough for them to find our address in the phone book. They rang Mum to ask if she was missing a toddler wearing only a singlet and, if so, could she come to the police station to collect him.

Put back

Meanwhile, in Grade 3 in 1945 I was falling even further behind. Couldn't do sums; couldn't read; couldn't spell. In the end my teacher, Mrs Chapman, visited Mum at home to explain that although I was bright enough, I wasn't coping. She guessed that I'd missed out on the basics by being accelerated from Grade 1 to Grade 2 the year before. She suggested that Mum should ask the headmaster to relegate me to Grade 2, where I'd rejoin the children I'd started school with two years earlier. Mum was certainly worried about me. She'd guessed I wasn't happy at school because I was reluctant to leave home each morning to go there; and she was concerned at the way my asthma attacks were becoming more frequent. I suppose that she or Dad must have visited the school to speak to Mr Bretherton, because soon afterwards he called me into his office to ask me if I wished to be 'put back' (his term) into Grade 2. Parroting Mum, I said that's what I wanted. He then instructed me to return to the Grade 3 classroom, collect my schoolbag and then walk downhill to the junior school to tell Miss Morrison that I was to be put back into Grade 2.

That's what I did, but Miss Morrison had a tizzy attack. When I knocked on her door, she asked, "What are you doing here?", an accusation in every word. I mumbled that Mr Bretherton had told me he was putting me back into Grade 2. This of course reflected badly on her decision to accelerate me the previous year. Visibly angered, she marched me into the Grade 2 room and told the teacher, the elderly Mrs Reid, that I was to be admitted into her class on the headmaster's instructions.

I settled in fairly quickly among my erstwhile classmates, but over the succeeding weeks Miss Morrison periodically came into the classroom to check on me. "Stand up, Ian Willis!" she'd command. "Run to the door. Now walk to the blackboard. Now jump to the window. Now go back to your seat." I guess she was testing me to see if I was the dimwit I'd seemed to be in Grade 3. "He understands everything perfectly," she'd then tell Mrs Reid. Meanwhile, she'd entertained the rest of the class, who enjoyed the diversion of watching the infant mistress put the hapless Ian Willis through his paces.

Looking back on these events, I'm still surprised that Mr Bretherton didn't escort me from the 'big' (senior) to the 'little' (junior) school to explain to Miss Morrison the reasons for my being 'put back'. I guess he was probably afraid of his fearsome infant mistress, and wished to avoid a confrontation with her. Whatever his reasons, I still think he shirked his duty by not accompanying me on the 'putting back' exercise.

Mrs Reid

In Mrs Reid's class I soon caught up with my classmates. Mrs Reid was probably in her 60s. She was tall and thin with leathery skin, wore unfashionable, dowdy old clothes, had crinkly grey hair tied at the back into an untidy 'bun', and spoke with a hoarse, rasping voice. She also had an uncertain temper and often shouted at us. Sometimes she became so angry she'd pick up an offending child by the shoulders for a good shaking. I remember on one occasion she lost her temper with a girl called June Miles. She swung June off her feet and then whirled her round against the blackboard with a thud. Stunned, June reeled back to her desk when Mrs Reid released her. Decades later my mate Bill Cross told me that Mrs Reid had once slammed his face against the blackboard so hard that his newly fitted set of dental braces were broken and had cut the inside of his cheek.

The breakthrough

Despite Mrs Reid's difficult temperament, which would nowadays cause her instant dismissal, she faithfully undertook the task of my educational rehabilitation. She visited our home to suggest that Mum could help my progress by hearing me read from the *Second Book* each day and by having me spell out the words from its spelling list. With Mum's coaching and Mrs Reid's encouragement, the 'breakthrough to literacy' soon occurred. I remember the moment it did. It happened during one of those 'round-the-class' reading sessions, when the teacher called on individual students to stand and read aloud from the grade reader.

"Turn to *'If all the seas were one sea'* on page 16," Mrs Reid commanded; "now Ian Willis, stand and read." I began hesitantly, word by word:

If all the seas were one sea,
What a great sea that would be!
If all the trees were one tree,
What a great tree that would be!

So far, so good. I continued reading more confidently and fluently:

If all the axes were one axe,
What a great axe that would be!
If all the men were one man,
What a great man that would be!

Hey, I'm reading at last, I realised! Enjoying the moment, I read the remaining four lines with dramatic flourish:

And if the great man took the great axe,
And cut down the great tree,
And let it fall into the great sea,
What a great splash that would be!

By this stage, some of my classmates were giggling at my overenthusiastic performance. I've always been highly sensitive to being laughed at, but that didn't bother me this time because I knew now that at long last I could read.

At school, and at home with Mum, I read all the remaining stories and poems in the *Second Book*. My favourite was 'The Hobyahs', a story about mysterious, evil, hooded creatures who crept on tip-toe from the bush at night to raid the house of an elderly couple, 'little old man' and 'little old woman', and their dog, 'little dog dingo'. The story ends with little dog dingo ridding the world of hobyahs by eating them all. Successive generations of Grade 2 children had nightmares about the hobyahs, but not me. In round-the-class reading sessions I read with gusto, emoting with passion as I mimicked the hobyahs gloating as they carried off 'little old woman' in a sack.

Old blokes remembering childhood

I've just spent three or four pages describing the bad year I spent at school during 1944–45, learning what it was like to be the dummy who was often bullied. That I remember it in such detail nearly eight decades later probably indicates that it impacted heavily on the psyche of the young me. As I look back on it, I'm reminded of the first two lines of a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish author of classic novels like *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*. They're from his poem 'Over the sea to Skye':

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I?

Was that timid lost 7-year-old really me? In trying to answer that question to my own satisfaction I've discovered a whole genre of poetry in which elderly people look back over the years to contemplate their childhood. Stevenson wasn't alone here. Even the great William Wordsworth wrote about it, coining the memorable phrase, 'The Child is father of the Man'.

The best of such poems that I've seen was sent to me by my Papua New Guinea mountain-climbing buddy, Hector McIntyre Clark. Hector, who's a month older than me, had a Scottish mother and English father. He and Bori, his wife of 60 years, now live in her hometown, Budapest. I'm not sure how he identifies himself these days, but I've always regarded him as Scottish. In his earlier years, with his red, curly hair, it wasn't hard to imagine him as the Chief of Clan MacIntyre rallying his clansmen to the side of Bonnie Prince Charlie in the 1745 uprising. Hector spent his boyhood at Dowally, a small village north of Perth on the road from Edinburgh to Inverness, because of which his ear is attuned to Broad Scots, the dialect once spoken by the common folk of Scotland. The poem is 'Yesterday' by William Soutar (1898–1943), who wrote in both Scots and English:

Yesterday

I'm auld eneuch noo
To be the faither o' yon deid bairn
That was me.
It was the sicht o' the wild-rose
That minded me o't.
Monie a simmer's day when it was owre hot
To breenge [plunge] eftir a butterflee
Or rin wi' a gird [hoop],
I ligg'd [lay] at the brae-fit [sloping river bank] and heard
The bee's and the burn's sang;
And the gowk [cuckoo] croodlin' [cooing] fae [from] the wüds abüne [above].
And as I gaid hame
I'd pu' the sma', wild roses
And fling them awa, or lang;
They were deid sae sune.

Thanks, Hector! For me, it's by far the best of the 'boyhood viewed retrospectively' poems I've seen. I won't digress now to tell the sad tale of William Soutar's life, but I suggest that, if interested, my readers could profitably check his *Wikipedia* entry.

I'm pleased to report that 1944–45 was just one bad year among 13 as I passed through the Victorian school system. All my other years at school were happy and enjoyable, from kindergarten in 1943 right up to the time I finished Form 6 at Melbourne High School at the end of 1955. I liked school, enjoyed learning, was a diligent student, valued the knowledge and skills I acquired, and appreciated the entrée that a thorough education bestowed.

End of the war

World War II ended while I was in Mrs Reid's Grade 2 class. Hostilities ceased and the war in the Pacific theatre ended on Wednesday 15 August 1945. That was when the Japanese government announced its surrender. A time of great jubilation in Australia, it's remembered as 'VJ' (Victory over Japan) and 'VP' (Victory in the Pacific) Day to distinguish it from 'VE' (Victory in Europe) Day, four months earlier on Tuesday 8th May, when the Nazi regime in Germany surrendered to the Allies.

I couldn't join the near-delirious celebrations because I was in bed suffering from measles. About a dozen kids from other end of Edgar Street were so overjoyed they organised their own street procession. They came marching down the road holding aloft improvised banners and banging on makeshift tin can drums. I wished I could have joined them, but as I was covered with the typical red measles rash, I had to be content with watching them from my bedroom window. After I'd recovered, Dad took us all down to the beach one night to sit on the foreshore, a good vantage point for seeing the enormous fireworks display that the military forces conducted on the far side of Port Phillip Bay.

I have many memories of the war, which ended three months before my eighth birthday. Everyone had relatives or friends away overseas fighting it, including two of my first-cousins — Trevor Willis, a junior officer in the Merchant Navy, and Jack Howie, an RAN able-bodied seaman. Everywhere we went, uniformed service personnel were on all the buses, trams and trains. At the beach we saw naval vessels steaming down Port Phillip Bay; and warplanes from the Point Cook RAAF base, just across the bay from Brighton, often roared overhead. We schoolboys became expert plane-spotters, able instantly to recognise a Spitfire, a Mustang and a Beaufighter. We all wished to be RAAF pilots, and at school we forever played 'aeroplane' games, running round the playground with our arms extended

sideways as 'wings', making 'dive-bomber' noises, pretending we were RAAF aircraft attacking the enemy.

On our occasional excursions into the city, US servicemen were lounging everywhere; and I recall one occasion when a couple of them propositioned Mum, despite her having three little children with her. Part of Dad's work building, the National Herbarium in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, was occupied by US Army officers, one of whom, Lee Burcham, like Dad a botanist, became one of Dad's lifelong friends. They kept in touch for decades, and on one occasion Dad visited Lee and his family in California. We used to look forward to Lee's visits for dinner, because he'd always bring us lavish gifts.

1946

In 1946 I moved back up the hill to the senior school. My Grade 2 cohort now became Miss Anson's Grade 3. Miss Anson was short, plump, bespectacled, sweet-natured, even-tempered, stylishly dressed, and softly spoken — the polar opposite of our Grade 2 teacher, Mrs Reid. I was soon 'promoted' to the back row of desks, where the high-performing students sat.

Grade 3 was something of a transition year. We learned the first of the 'times tables': '2', '3', '4' & '5' times all the numbers up to 12. We spent part of each day chanting them in unison — 'Once two is two, two twos are four, three twos are six' and so on all the way up 'twelve twos are twenty-four'. We learned addition and subtraction up to 100; and then we were introduced to multiplication and division using the 'times tables' we had learnt.

In English we started learning grammar, beginning with nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. We read from the Grade 3 reader, the *Third Book*, which I enjoyed dipping into; and we started reading the monthly *School Paper* issued by the Education Department, each month's edition of which we added to a special hard cardboard folder with strings down the inside of the spine to hold the paper in place. The February edition always carried that year's spelling list; and on the back cover of successive editions were the words and music of a song we would learn to sing.

We also began writing with pen and ink. Instead of writing in print script on slates, we learned how to do 'running writing' in the 'copperplate' style; and we wrote in exercise books, one for each subject — English, arithmetic, history, geography, health and nature study. The ink was kept in an inkwell slotted into a round hole on the front top right of the desk; and the ink monitor filled the inkwells daily. Every child kept a pen with steel nib in his/her pencil case, and a sheet of blotting paper. Until you got the hang of dipping your nib the right depth into the inkwell to have the right amount of ink on the nib, you'd drip blots and leave smudges on the desk, the exercise book and your fingers. Grade 3 exercise books therefore tended to be messy.

Alan Tudor

It was in Grade 3 in 1946 that I made my first true school friend — Alan Tasman Tudor. Alan was a 'new boy', one who had transferred into our school from The Patch, a small rural settlement between Kallista and Monbulk in the Dandenong Ranges. He and his older sister, Wendy, began attending the Male Street Methodist Sunday school, which was always the 'home away from home' for the Willises. Wendy became one of Ruth's closest friends, and Alan became mine for the next ten years. We sat together most of the time in our remaining years at primary school, then went through Gardenvale Central School together during Years 7 & 8 and were then at Melbourne High School together until Year 12, before going up to the University of Melbourne in 1956.

Alan graduated in Commerce, became an accountant, married, had children, and established a business specialising in bankruptcy. I graduated in Arts and became a teacher and eventually an historian. As is often the way with childhood friends, we had less and less to do with each other as we reached our late teens and entered manhood. Growing apart; changing interests; new friends; differing outlooks; emerging personalities that weren't greatly consonant with each other. That's how it was as Alan's life and mine diverged. We've seen each other intermittently at school reunions over the years. When we do we greet each other warmly, but the old friendship diminished many decades ago. I sense that Alan silently reproaches me for not having maintained the friendship, but friendship is a 'two-way street' that requires both friends to work at it for it to survive.

Bike riding

A great personal achievement for me during 1946 was learning to ride a two-wheeled bicycle. The first time I ever did was on an antique kid's bike, 1920s vintage, with tiny wheels. It belonged to a boy called John Higginbotham who was a year younger than me and the younger brother of Lois. Lois was Ruth's bosom buddy and classmate at Hampton High School, which they both began attending that year. The Higginbothams lived a block away from us in Williams Street, where many children lived. I was visiting the Higginbothams with Ruth one afternoon, and all the local kids were out in the street taking turns at riding John's bike. When my turn came, I couldn't admit that I didn't know how to ride a two-wheeler, so I sat on the seat, scooted my feet to gain momentum, and then began peddling. I wobbled a bit at first but was soon steering steadily. I rode up and down the street a couple of times, perhaps 20 metres in each direction, before dismounting so the next kid could have his turn.

I could write a whole chapter about my bike-riding adventures, but I'll spare you that. Suffice to say that bike-riding became my passion. I loved the sense of freedom it brought, and its possibilities for going fast to distant places that I'd never walk to. I had no bike of my own yet and wouldn't be given one — a heavy second-hand bone-shaker — as a Christmas present until a couple of years later. In the meantime I rode Mum's bike, which she couldn't ride despite Dad's best efforts at trying to teach her. After her last lesson, when she fell off, gashing her arm on the handlebar, she gave up trying to learn. Her bike stood idle in the back shed until I began riding it at every opportunity.

1947

Grade 4, 1947, found us in the class of Mr Richard John ('Jack') Gainey (1890–1975). We were now sex-segregated, the boys and girls separated into single-sex classes for Grades 4, 5 and 6. Mr Gainey's class was huge — 60 boys on the roll, double the present-day maximum class size. The desks were crammed together with the space between the rows so narrow that the teacher had to turn side-on to make his way up and down the rows to check our work; and the front desks abutted the dais in front of the blackboard. Somehow, Mr Gainey maintained order and kept noise levels down. He used the strap frequently; and for the first time ever, I received the 'cuts'.

Being strapped always appalled me, even though it only happened three or four times a year. For me, the cuts not only hurt but were a humiliating, violent assault on my sense of personal integrity. Dad occasionally strapped David and me at home, usually for having insulted Mum. His strappings were far worse than those at school because he made us drop our shorts, then bend over to receive his furious lashings on the bare buttocks. There was something demonic about it, which is why the memory of it still disturbs me. He'd trot out platitudes like 'this will hurt me more than it hurts you' and — when we screamed in rage

afterwards — 'take your punishment like a man'. Whatever was going on in Dad's head, the thrashings he gave us still trouble me because he was otherwise a gentle, kindly, considerate chap, and a lifelong pacifist. Neither David nor I ever chastised our own sons like that.

Mr Gainey was a brilliant, charismatic teacher. I got to love him almost as much as I did Dad; and on a few occasions I embarrassed myself by inadvertently calling him 'Dad'. I used to draw and colour-in pictures at home to give him as presents. I don't know what he made of that, but I guess he was used to schoolboys seeing the father figure in him.

Jack Gainey was a country boy from Mincha West, a farming community between Pyramid Hill and the Murray River in northern Victoria. He was a Methodist like the Willises, and very much the patriotic imperial loyalist, so I've been surprised to learn that his unusual surname is Irish Gaelic. Like Dad (and eventually me), he was a Melbourne High School 'Old Boy'. He'd served as a gunnery sergeant on the Western Front in France and Belgium during World War I, but after being wounded and gassed in March 1918 had been repatriated to Australia. (On one occasion he rolled up his trouser leg to show us where he'd been wounded.) In 1919 he returned to teaching as a suburban classroom teacher in Melbourne. Before his enlistment he'd taught in various single-room bush schools. He left our school about 1948 to become the headmaster at Abbotsford, adjacent to Collingwood. He then entered the State Parliament in 1955 as the Liberal Party member for Elsternwick. I met him socially, at a ball, ten years after he'd taught me, but he didn't seem to remember me. I was somewhat disappointed at that, but, being fair to him, he must have taught many hundreds of boys over a 44-year teaching career, so he couldn't be expected to remember them all.

Storytelling

Jack Gainey gave me opportunities to explore my awakening interest in history. We studied history as a separate subject, following *Whitcombe's Vivid History Reader Grade IV: Stories of Exploration, Myths & Stories of World History*, published for Victorian schools in 1938. Mr Gainey's habit was to read us an excerpt from the reader, then have us to draw illustrations about it in our exercise books. A day or two later he'd ask one of us to stand on the dais before the class to re-tell in our own words the story he'd read us earlier. This was an exercise I enjoyed, because as I stood up to recite the story of, say, Robert the Bruce hiding in a cave from his enemies and being saved by the spider which spun its web across the entrance, I'd realise that the class was listening attentively. I must have been telling the story well; and that was an encouragement to keep on being the storyteller. The best historians are also storytellers, so regurgitating historical stories to my Grade 4 classmates helped me discover my historian's vocation.

Jack Gainey's own storytelling was enthralling. He used to tell us about his adventures as a bush schoolteacher when he was a young chap. At the time of his enlistment in the Army in 1916 at age 25, he was the teacher at Glenhope, a small settlement in the beautiful rolling countryside of central Victoria 21 kilometres north-east of Kyneton and about halfway between there and Harcourt. Many of his yarns were tall stories, for example his pursuit of a bunyip — a mythological monster of the swamps — that turned out to be an Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*). Bitterns are elusive birds of freshwater wetlands. They're rarely seen because they're nocturnal and spend the daylight hours hiding among dense reeds. As Jack told the story, the booming cry of the bittern was so eerie he really believed at first that he was following a bunyip. Glenhope was certainly within the bittern range, which extends across much of south-east Australia, so it's possible that Jack had seen and heard a bittern along a creek one evening. Whether he had or not was of no consequence to us. We

hung on his every word. I was sure I was hearing Gospel truth and wished I could have been with Jack as he pursued his bunyip.

Wire-twisting

A useful skill that Mr Gainey taught us was how to make toasting-forks from fencing wire. You took a 1-metre length of wire, bent it double, made a loop at one end by wrapping it round a broom handle, and then you fastened the two loose ends into a bit-brace. You turned the bit-brace so that the two arms of wire twisted round each other in a spiral. When the spiral was tight, you released the wire, bent the two loose ends into shape with pliers to make the toaster prongs. Next, you hammered the ends of the prongs flat against a piece of flat iron; and to complete the job you filed them into shape so that they looked like tiny spear-heads. Finally, you took a sheet of newspaper, folded it over several times, wrapped it round the shaft of your toasting-fork, then vigorously rubbed it up and down, which put a shine on the twisted wire. I subsequently made numerous toasting-forks of various lengths for Mum. She had a collection of them at our holiday house at Creswick. The family often sat around the open fire together to make their breakfast toast. I still have one of them, which I use on occasional camping trips.

Wire-twisting turned out to be a useful skill. Over the years I've used it on many occasions in handyman construction and maintenance jobs around the house. These days I use an electric drill rather than a bit-brace to twist the wire; and instead of the broom handle for the loop at the end, I use a short pipe held steady in the vise. And straightened-out wire coat-hangers are a convenient substitute for fencing wire. Thanks, Jack Gainey, for teaching me how to twist wire 75 years ago!

1948

In 1948, Mr Gainey's Grade 4 of 1947 moved up a year to become Mr Dunell's Grade 5. I never warmed to Mr Dunell (pronounced 'dew-nell'), a sarcastic chap who used the strap too often. (I can't say for sure what his first name was, but it might have been James.) I had more cuts of the strap in Grade 5 than in all the other years combined. One reason for that was that each day's lessons began with a 10-word spelling test of the next block of words from the Grade 5 spelling list. For every word spelt wrongly, we'd get a cut. Strapping us all at the end of the spelling test took some time, because 30 or more of us would be lined up at the front of the class waiting to receive our quota of cuts. I used to pity the boys who'd misspelt seven or eight words. The most I'd get wrong was one or two. I hated the strap so much that I'd rehearse spelling the ten words on the next day's spelling list with Mum before going to bed, and again the next morning before leaving for school. I probably have Mr Dunell's daily strapping sessions to thank for having become a highly proficient speller.

Mr Dunell strapped on the slightest pretext. The most unjust was once during the weekly craft session. He'd told us the day before to bring coloured paper to school from home for a paper-cutting, folding and pasting exercise. Most of us forgot, so the craft lesson began with us all getting a cut of the strap while Mr Dunell fulminated that having no coloured paper at home was no excuse. We could easily have brought along coloured pages from our mothers' old magazines, he thundered. If I'd been brave enough, I'd have refused to receive my cut. "If you try to give me the cuts for having no coloured paper," I should have said, "I'll get Dad to protest your strap-happy ways to Mr Bretherton! And in any case, if you want us to work with coloured paper so badly, it's your responsibility as the teacher to provide it!" Not yet bold enough to stand up to teachers, however, I received my cut with accustomed stoic resignation. With the other miscreants, I then spent the rest of the craft

session doing sums from the arithmetic textbook while the boys with coloured paper did their cutting-and-pasting.

Mr Dunell also played favourites. The favourite-in-chief was Graham Pitcher, a pleasant, friendly lad who later went to Melbourne High School with me. Graham used to answer Mr Dunell's questions eagerly; and when he answered well Mr Dunell would praise him lavishly. One of my friends, Colin Hocking, who was in the same Sunday School class as Alan Tudor and me, used to chuckle with me about Mr Dunell's favouritism. Each time Mr Dunell commended Graham to the class, Colin and I would exchange 'meaningful' glances. Mr Dunell caught us at it on one occasion. We didn't get the cuts, but he yelled at us angrily, "Wipe those smirks off your faces, Hocking and Willis!".

One aspect of Mr Dunell's classes that I did enjoy was the singing. He was 'musical'. I don't know if he was himself an instrumentalist or a singer, but he conducted the school choir and the fife band, in which Ruth had once played. We spent part of each day sitting up straight in the approved singing posture singing from our class repertoire. Most of the songs came from the School Paper or ABC Radio schools' song book. They included old favourites such as 'The British Grenadiers', 'The Lincolnshire Poacher', 'Three Cheers for the Red, White and Blue', 'Road to the Isles', 'Eton Boating Song' and 'The Eriskay Love Lilt'. None of these songs was Australian, but that probably didn't occur to us because we were Empire loyalists and, like Mr Dunell, regarded Britain as 'Home' even though we'd never been there.

Feats of memory

It was during Grade 5 that I realised I had an aptitude that was later useful in my historian's career — I had a retentive memory and was good at memorising things. For some reason I don't know, I memorised the names of all the horses that had won the last 15 Melbourne Cups and could rattle off the list of winners. This was surprising because our home must have been one of few in our street not to turn on its radio to hear the great race called on Melbourne Cup Day, the first Tuesday in November, which was a public holiday in Victoria. For 'wowser' denominations like the Methodists, that was the day when Sunday Schools conducted their annual picnics.

My knack for memorisation was confirmed during our weekly religious instruction ('RI') lessons, which were conducted by the Rev. Harold Rouch, who happened to be the Minister at the Male Street Methodist Church, where some of us attended Sunday School. To encourage our Bible reading, Rev. Rouch conducted a competition. He set us the task of learning the 23rd Psalm (*'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want'*), verse by verse, adding a new verse each week. Those who entered the competition would then stand up in the RI class to recite all the verses they'd learnt. By the third week (*'He restoreth my soul'*), with three verses to recite, the field had narrowed to about four competitors; and by the fourth week (*'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death'*) only two of us remained. The other chap dropped out in the fifth week (*'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies'*), leaving me to go on to claim the prize in week six. I forget what that was, but it might have been a pocket edition of the Gospels. With a sense of fulfilment, I stood to recite the entire psalm up to and including the last verse — *'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever'*. My classmates seemed to appreciate this feat of memory, but I can't be sure if any of us gained much in spiritual enlightenment from it.

A family digression

The main family event of 1948 was the arrival of the fifth and last of the Willis children — Dorothy, known more familiarly as 'Dot', on 6th July. I remember coming home from school that day to be greeted by my Aunty James with "You have a new sister".

Dot was everyone's darling. The other four of us squabbled but only with each other, never with Dot. We no longer quarrel because we've learnt to be firm friends as well siblings; and we all take pleasure in each other's achievements, and those of our children and grandchildren.

At this point I'll digress to say more about my three sisters and brother. Briefly, they're as follows:

- **Ruth Anne Willis**, born 17 April 1935, is the oldest. She was named Ruth because Mum liked the 'Ruth and Naomi' Biblical story. Her middle name was that of her maternal grandmother. She became a primary teacher, then after her children had all left home she retrained as a school librarian. She married a chap from the Male Street Methodist Church, Jack Churchyard, and they had three children: Andrew, who became a physician; Meredith, who became a secondary teacher; and Linda, who became an early childhood teacher. Ruth and Jack have five grandchildren, all now adults.
- I was next in the birth order. I attended Toorak Teachers' College and the University of Melbourne, became a primary teacher, and married Margaret Vale, whom I got to know through the Male Street Methodist Church. We have three children: Rosemary (Rosie), a psychological counsellor and special needs teacher, now living in Buckie, Scotland; Anthony (Tony), who trained as a botanist, then became a senior public servant but now runs his own consultancy business providing advice on government-funded research; and Catherine (Katie), who trained as a biological anthropologist, but is now a senior official in the Australian Crime Commission. Between them, they gave us seven grandchildren.
- And then came **David Charles Willis**, born 10 October 1941. He was named David after the Biblical king; and his middle name was that of his maternal grandfather. After high school, he attended the Longeranong Agricultural College, near Horsham in Victoria's Wimmera district. As soon as he had graduated, he took a job as a government agricultural extension officer in Papua New Guinea, where he spent all but a couple of years of his working life. He married Lucy Ugoka Sagrias, from Kambot village on the Keram River, a major tributary of the mighty Sepik River. On quitting PNG in 1980, they settled at Logan Reserve, a southern outer suburb of Brisbane, where they raised their three children: John Charles, who became a real estate agent in Brisbane; Lucy Anne, who became a special needs teacher; and Julie Mary, who's a business manager. David & Lucy have six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.
- **Helen Mary Willis**, born 24 October 1944, carries two ancestral names. Her first name is one that travelled down our Pringle lineage, and her middle name is that of her paternal grandmother. Before retiring, she worked variously as a secretary and small business proprietor. She married first Gary Ridder, a chap she met at the Male Street Methodist Church, by whom she three children: Benjamin, an ecologist who has settled in Edinburgh; Jessica, a physical education teacher-turned-real estate agent; and James, who trained as a fisheries manager but works as a stonemason and

path-builder in national parks. Helen is now married to Andrew Cossenas and lives in retirement in Creswick, our ancestral town in central Victoria. She has three grandchildren.

- **Dorothy Mavis Willis**, born 6 July 1948, was named after her mother's sister and for a middle name was given Mum's first name. After Toorak Teachers' College, which Ruth, Margaret and I also attended, she spent her working life teaching in primary schools in various Victorian towns. She married Graeme Charles, another chap from the Male Street Methodist Church, and produced three children: Claire, a university lecturer in Education; Christopher, who trained as a cartographer and then became a spatial analyst; and Eugene, who trained in building construction and is now a building estimator. Dot and Graeme have six grandchildren.

Put all that together, and we can say that Jim and Mavis Willis produced a numerous tribe of descendants — five children, 15 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren and, as of March 2022, one great-great-grandchild.

Mr Dunell departs

Before leaving 1948 and Grade 5 for 1949 and Grade 6, I'll note that Mr Dunell disappeared from the scene about the end of Term 2 in September. The reason was probably that he'd transferred or been promoted to another school.

The Victorian Education Department's primary teachers were distributed across four promotional classes, numbered I (principal level), II (deputy principals & principals of middle-sized schools), III (senior classroom teachers & principals of smaller two- and three-teacher schools), and IV (ordinary classroom teachers & principals of one-teacher rural schools). Each year the department would publish the 'promotions list' showing where each teacher was situated in the promotional hierarchy. The names were entered class by class in order of seniority and then alphabetically.

In 1962, 14 years later after being taught and strapped by Mr Dunell, when I was in my first year of primary school teaching, I realised that his career had stalled. When that year's promotions list was published, I read it with interest to see which of my teachers' college chums from 1959 were clambering up the promotional ladder. A couple of them had already been promoted into Class III, whereas 'Willis, Ian J.', a recent entrant to the profession after completing university, was near the bottom of Class IV. And then I noticed that a 'Dunell' occupied first spot in Class III. That didn't mean he was the best teacher there, but simply that he'd been in Class III the longest. Somehow, the school inspectors hadn't deemed him worthy of promotion to Class II. I'm assuming here that the Class III Dunell in 1962 was the self-same chap who's strapped me often in 1948. Chances are that it was, because Dunell is a very rare surname with only a handful of listings in the online phone directory.

Mr Kennedy

After Mr Dunell's departure, a Mr Kennedy became the Grade 5 Boys' teacher; and we changed classrooms, moving from the dark eastern wing of the school to a light and airy room on the west side. From the windows we could gaze out to the north-east towards the Dandenong Ranges. I used to sit in class daydreaming, thinking how wonderful it would be if I could be magically wafted out the window to the bush around Grandma's house at Ferny Creek. Mr Kennedy was a stern but kindly chap, and I don't remember him strapping us. (He later taught David, who recalls him 'swinging the leather'.)

I think Mr Kennedy's first name was Ted. He had an older brother on the staff called Tom. The brothers closely resembled each other. To distinguish between them, we called them Mr Ted and Mr Tom.

Under Mr Kennedy's tutelage we finished learning all the 'times tables,' right up to '11-times' and '12-times'. Part of each morning was given over to reciting and being quizzed on the tables. We mastered the intricacies of long multiplication and long division. And we became proficient in the tables of weights and measures: '16 ounces = 1 pound, 28 pounds = 1 quarter, 4 quarters = 1 hundredweight, 20 hundredweights = 1 ton'; '12 inches = 1 foot, 3 feet = 1 yard, 22 yards = 1 chain, 10 chains = 1 furlong, 8 furlongs = 1 mile' and so on. None of us had yet heard of the metric scales, which weren't introduced until Form 2 in secondary school.

English lessons diversified. We learnt and were continually tested on all the words in the Grade 5 spelling list. We wrote free-style 'compositions' on assigned topics. We took dictation. We learned more grammar, including parsing sentences into subject-verb-object-complement, the parts of speech, the declension of pronouns, the conjugation of verbs, the comparison of adjectives, and the active and passive voices. We continued reading aloud from the grade reader, the *Fifth Book*, which contained poetic gems such as John Shaw Neilson's 'Old Granny Sullivan', Henry Lawson's 'Ballad of the Drover' and Alfred Tennyson's 'The Brook'. We were expected to memorise and recite poems, but I remember none of the lines I learned. And we were allowed to choose library books to read from the shelves down one side of the room. Because of this innovation, I read my first full-length, 'no pictures' novel, an English schoolboy story set in an earlier age, but a step up from the picture books and comics I read at home.

Schoolyard games

Out in playground we played marbles all year round. In winter we kicked the football ('Australian rules': no one had heard of soccer or rugby). We kicked it 'end-to-end', i.e. back and forth between one mob at one end of the schoolyard and another about 40 metres away at the other end. If there was no inflatable ball, we improvised by rolling a newspaper into a tight wad then binding it with thick string. In spring and summer we played cricket, using a schoolyard post as the wicket. We brought our own bats along and used a tennis ball.

Once a week, Friday afternoon, we were marched along Alverna Grove to the Williams Street oval, 200 metres east of the school, where, according to the season, we took part in running races, or played 'scratch' matches in football and cricket. A scratch match was where two captains were appointed, then took turns to pick their players. I was usually among the last group chosen, those not regarded as 'sporty' by their classmates. Fortunately for my self-esteem, I was never picked last, but maybe third or fourth last. No one coached us, telling us how to kick a football, bowl a cricket ball or face the bowling with a straight bat; we simply learned by playing. Despite that, I picked up the basic skills for both football and cricket, and discovered how each game has its own rhythm, ebb and flow. This took me longer than most other boys because Dad wasn't remotely interested in team games, whereas other boys' fathers kicked footballs, played backyard cricket with them, and took them to watch grown-up matches.

There were also fads for other games, which came and went — hoppo-bumpo, paper aeroplanes, folded paper 'fortune-tellers', cops & robbers with cap pistols, hop-scotch, poison ball, and British bulldog. One such game, which had no name, consisted of one boy draping 'reins' around his shoulders, while another boy steered him as he galloped at full pace around the playground, in and out between the various groups of other boys playing there. (Our playgrounds were segregated, boys to the east, girls to the west.) The 'reins' for this game

were circlets of leather about 7 centimetres in diameter left over from the manufacture of cricket balls at Thompson's 'Kookaburra' cricket ball factory in Bay Street. Every week or so the factory would dump these circular offcuts on the vacant allotment next door. Some inventive lad had discovered that if you looped enough circlets together, each linked to the next with a 'lark's foot' knot, you'd have a strong and sturdy rope. When I visited the allotment, I was thrilled to find sufficient circlets for a rope about four metres long — the detritus from maybe 28 'Kookaburras'.

A shameful habit

To my lasting great shame, one bad habit I picked up during Grade 5 was swearing — the too-frequent resort to expletives like 'bloody', 'bugger' and worse. At first I thought it was smart. I also thought it made me seem 'tough' to the other schoolkids. The ability to shock others by being foul-mouthed was a novelty at first, but, like cigarette smoking, was highly addictive. I've struggled ever since to eradicate the habit, but particularly in times of stress I resort to it. It embarrasses my children and distresses Margaret greatly, especially as I'm the only member of the family ever to have been a swearer; and she is troubled by the loss of self-control that it represents.

1949

The last year of the 1940s, 1949, was my last year of primary school, Grade 6. Our teacher was a kindly, likeable chap called Mr Price. He was tall, thin and angular, with a prominent Adam's apple that rose and fell as he talked. He had an olive complexion, dark hair and his dark eyes twinkled behind his spectacles. He used to ride his bike to work each day from East Brighton or Bentleigh. Like all the other male teachers, he wore a suit, collar and tie, over which he wore a grey dustcoat. Like them, too, he was a disciplinarian who wielded a strap, but only for the most serious offences. I didn't receive it often, maybe only once or twice that year.

Our 'three-Rs' schoolwork was an extension of what we had done in earlier grades. In arithmetic the big step forward was to learn how to add, subtract, multiply and divide vulgar fractions. Once we'd mastered that, we learned how to do the same with decimals. I remember doing well in spelling, dictation and grammar tests, but can't recall what we learned in the other subjects. We mightn't have sung as much as we'd done under Mr Dunell the year before, but each week we took part in ABC Radio's singing lesson, learning a new piece from the accompanying song book. My favourite session of the week was at 11.00 on Friday morning, when we listened to the 'Our Heritage of English' broadcast, a half-hour when excerpts from literature were read out. I can't recall any of them, but perhaps they included chapters of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* or *David Copperfield*.

Sloyd

A new activity, which I also enjoyed greatly, was sloyd — elementary carpentry. A welcome relief from the tedium of daily lessons, it took up one whole morning a week in a separate building on the western side of the playground. The teacher was a taciturn Scotsman, Mr Mulloch, who taught us how to use tenon saw, crosscut saw, plane, chisel, hammer, screw-driver, brace-and-bit, try-square, marking-gauge, vise, bench-hook, mitre-box etc at a work bench. We constructed simple items, including toothbrush-holder, matchbox-stand, salt-cellar and footstool. We very soon recognised which boys would become skilled craftsmen and, at the other end of the scale, the duffers who were totally inept with tools. I was perhaps

somewhere in the upper half of the large middle group, among those whose products might be marked 6 or 6½ out of 10.

I took sloyd for three years, at primary and secondary school; and so, I recall, did David. Mum kept the items we made, and so the Willis household steadily accumulated more toothbrush holders and salt cellars than it could use.

Polio

During 1949 Australia suffered its last epidemic of poliomyelitis, then commonly known as 'infantile paralysis'. It was a terrible, crippling infectious viral disease. Its after-effects could be seen among the survivors, a few of whom were among the student population of many schools. They wore cumbersome leg-braces and often used crutches. Fortunately, the introduction of the Salk vaccine in 1955 and the subsequent mass immunisation of the nation's schoolchildren ended the scourge of periodic epidemics of 'polio' in Australia. We were terrified of becoming its victims and walked in fear of contracting it. At home our mothers scalded the milk we used, because one theory was that polio was being transmitted in milk. (They probably could have spared themselves the effort because the disease is mainly spread via faecally contaminated food and water.) The World Health Organisation declared Australia to be poliomyelitis-free during 2000, but since then the disease has made a comeback here. That's a result of parents' no longer having their children immunised, and the arrival of infected Asian and African immigrants.

Anticipating secondary school

The big decision we sixth-graders had to make during third term was what secondary schools we would attend in 1950. Two boys went to major fee-paying private schools: Wayne Gilbert to Melbourne Grammar and Geoffrey Fuller to Wesley College. Four of us aspired to the academically selective Melbourne High School, which has only Grades 9 to 12, known then as Forms 3 to 6. That meant spending two years at a 'central school' or MHS feeder school before entering MHS in Form 3 in 1952. Brian May and Graham Pitcher went to Elwood Central; Alan Tudor and Ian Willis went to Gardenvale Central. Four boys, John Bulmer, Dane Dahlberg, Michael Guinness and Colin Hocking, went to Hampton High School, in the next suburb going south. (This was where Ruth and later David were enrolled; and it was where Margaret and her two sisters, Penelope and Susan, received their secondary schooling.)

Most of my Grade 6 class, maybe 30 boys, went to the local 'Tech' — Brighton Technical School. There they received vocationally-oriented training, with an emphasis on woodwork and metalwork. The assumption was that after they'd completed the four-year program, Forms 1 to 4, they'd enter apprenticeships and become carpenters, cabinetmakers, plumbers, motor mechanics, bricklayers, electricians, telecommunications technicians, panel beaters, fitters-and-turners, instrument makers and so on. My erstwhile Sunday School companion, Bill Cross, was one who went to the Tech. After Form 4, he served his time as an apprentice aircraft fitter with the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fisherman's Bend, near the mouth of the Yarra River. One 'academically challenged' lad, Max Burns, the tallest, burliest, toughest and most physically mature boy in the class, had to repeat the year because his test results weren't good enough for him to go on to secondary school yet.

The choice of secondary schools broadly reflected the boys' social class background. The two who went on to private schools were both from affluent homes. The eight who went to central and high schools were from 'middle-middle-class' homes, and their fathers were white-collar workers. The Tech boys were generally from working-class homes in which the fathers were tradesmen, factory workers, carters, drivers and labourers. Two or three were

from single-parent families with no live-in fathers. We were only vaguely aware of these nuances in our Grade 6 sociological profile, but there were pointers to class status that we recognised. The boys from blue-collar families wore trousers, shirts, socks and pullovers that were more frequently darned; fewer of them attended Sunday School; they were generally better at 'rough' games like football; and all the class 'toughies' were from their group.

Extramural activities

As well as our intramural lives at school, most of us had outside interests and activities. Many of us attended Sunday Schools, of which there were eight to choose from — two Anglican, one Baptist, one Church of Christ, two Methodist, one Presbyterian and one Salvation Army. As far as I recall, no Catholics were in the class; and in any case the Catholics in our part of Brighton usually went to the parish schools attached to the two local Catholic churches — St Finbar's on Centre Road in East Brighton and St Joan of Arc on the corner of New and Dendy Streets in Brighton Beach. Many of us belonged to one of Brighton's 11 Cub packs, i.e. the most junior level of the Scout movement. With Alan Tudor, I joined 5th Brighton, known as 'St Luke's own' because it was linked to St Luke's Anglican Church in Bay Street. There were about 30 of us in 5th Brighton, and we met on Saturday afternoons in the Sunday School Hall. I was a Cub for three years, all the way through Grades 4, 5 and 6.

At the same time, and for several years afterwards, David and I attended the gymnasium classes conducted in our own Male Street Methodist Sunday School hall by Bert Berriman, one of the men of the church. Bert's gym sessions were on Friday evening, so they didn't conflict with Cubs at St Luke's on Saturday. Yet another activity in the Sunday School hall was the junior choir, formed and conducted by Wesley Rouch, the Minister's son. The choir, which rehearsed on Thursday evenings, participated with some success in the annual Methodist children's choir eisteddfods. We never won the state championship, but usually managed to come second behind the superlative Belmont choir from Geelong. Perhaps Belmont had the edge because their female conductor was a professional music teacher, whereas Wesley, although musically gifted, was only a medical student at the University of Melbourne

Another activity for a couple of years, 1947 & 48, was the junior group of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria. Dad was a leading light in the FNCV, and he was keen for his children to be as passionately committed to the world of nature and its conservation as he was. He used to take Ruth and me to the monthly meetings of the FNCV Juniors in a back room of the Hawthorn Town Hall. Getting there meant catching two trains, North Brighton-Richmond then Richmond-Glenferry, and then walking 100 metres round the corner to the meeting room. For me, if not for Ruth, these expeditions were monumentally tedious. Recondite fields such as mycology (study of fungi), agrostology (grasses), phycology (seaweeds) and bryology (mosses) were all of professional interest to Dad but were unappealing to me.

The one topic that did capture my attention was caliology — the study of birds' nests (a word I've just discovered after googling it). I began collecting birds' nests, perhaps because I was fascinated by their architecture and construction. Eventually I gathered several dozen before my interest waned. My favourites were those of the mudlark, the thornbill, the goldfinch, the mistletoe bird and the wild, untidy yet cleverly constructed magpie nest, the outer part of which comprised lengths of baling wire bent into shape by the resourceful maggies. One year my neatly labelled collection went on display in the FNCV Juniors' annual public exhibition in the town hall.

By that stage, however, Dad had probably decided that Ruth and I would never be ardent field naturalists, and so he stopped taking us to the meetings. In any case, by then, end

of 1948, he was hard at work on his *magnum opus*, the two-volume *A Handbook to Plants in Victoria*, a monumental work that took him the next 25 years to complete. Even though I never became a field naturalist after Dad's own heart, the trips to the Hawthorn Town Hall weren't entirely wasted, because they were an important aspect of my informal education and did leave me a sense of wonder in beholding the natural world.

A delivery boy

One notable development during my Grade 6 year was that I entered the world of wage labour when Mum found me a job delivering fruit and vegetables for a greengrocer. I didn't want a job I and was a reluctant employee, but Mum thought that I should do my bit to supplement the family income. Money was always short at home, to the extent that Mum herself was spending a couple of mornings a week house cleaning for two messy sisters, doctors' wives, in New Street at the bottom end of Bay Street. No childminding then, so she had to take Dorothy, a toddler, with her. I don't know how she found me my job, because the greengrocer, a pre-war Italian immigrant, Bartolomeo Palamara, didn't conduct his business in our local area. His shop was in the shopping centre on Hampton Street between Marriage Road and Pine Street, a kilometre away from home.

Mr Palamara spoke little English, and his wife less, so the business was run by their unmarried daughter Josi (Josephine/Giuseppina), an obese, young woman in her mid-20s. She had short black curly hair and a discernible line of dark hair on her upper lip. She was tough, and she worked me hard, but we got on fairly well, even though she always referred to me as 'the boy' rather than Ian. I worked five afternoons a week from about 4.00 till 6.00 p.m. and on Saturday mornings from 7.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m. — 16 hours a week in all weathers and seasons for £1 ($2), equivalent to about $60 in present-day values. I delivered orders on my bike, balancing a standard wooden fruit box measuring 12 inches wide by 24 inches deep by 30 inches long (about 30 x 61 x 76 centimetres) on the handlebars. Hazards included the heavy traffic in Hampton Street, savage dogs in some houses, swooping magpies, and unfriendly gangs of kids who yelled insults and occasionally threw stones.

I never liked the work and resented having to do it to keep Mum happy, but I continued with it for the three years until I began at Melbourne High School in 1952. Apart from the cash, the benefits included keeping fit through lifting heavy boxes and pedalling my heavily laden bike. I also learned how to handle money and count out change; plus I had to deal with the dozens of customers, which gave me confidence and taught me some useful social skills.

When I began at Melbourne High School in 1952, Mum found me another fruit and veggie delivery job. This time my employers were Mr and Mrs Cincotta, whose greengrocery was in Bay Street only a few hundred metres from home. I only worked there Saturday mornings, from 7.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m., for which I received £1 & 5 shillings ($2.50), or about $50 nowadays. The Cincottas had a son and daughter a year or two older than me — Joe, who became a carpenter, and Mary, who later married a British naval officer. I continued working for the Cincottas right through my four years at MHS. The lifting of heavy boxes helped develop my upper-body and arm strength, and all the bike-riding balancing the boxes kept me reasonably fit.

Essendon

By Grade 6 I had become an ardent supporter of the Essendon Football Club in the Victorian Football League — the 'Bombers'. Every boy in the class followed one of the 12 VFL teams. I don't know how or why they chose teams to support, but my own reasons were eccentric. I could have chosen Geelong, for whom my Grandpa Howie had played 70 years earlier; but I

didn't know about that then. My main reason for choosing the Bombers was that the northern terminus for the trains on the Brighton line was Essendon; and so that was the destination name displayed on the front of the trains going north into the city and beyond. When other boys asked who I supported, the only name I could think of there and then was Essendon. And so I became a Bombers fan.

Another reason for supporting the Bombers was their star player, John Coleman. He was probably the greatest full-forward ever to have played the game. He kicked 12 goals in his first match, and his hundredth in the dying minutes of the 1949 grand final, when Essendon trounced the Carlton 'Blues' by 18 goals 17 behinds (125 points) to 6.16 (52). I idolised John Coleman, who was handsome, fresh-faced, slender and youthful — age 20 but looked several years younger. He was a footballing prodigy. He took high, soaring marks, effortlessly leaping head, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles above the pack. Having marked, he most often goaled. He remains the only VFL/AFL player to have kicked a hundred goals in his first season. I was overjoyed with the Bombers' 1949 premiership, and just as pleased that John Coleman was that season's top goalkicker.

I had a footballing triumph of my own that year. I became the first boy in my class to collect all 108 'famous footballer' cards in the 'Weeties' set. Weeties, a popular breakfast cereal, offered one free footballer card inside every packet. Collecting the entire set took some effort. To increase your collection, you'd persuade friends and neighbours who weren't collecting the cards to give you theirs. If you had duplicates, you could swap them with schoolmates who had duplicates of other cards you didn't yet have. The cannier collectors would trade them for a price, e.g. 'one Dick Reynolds [Essendon captain] is worth two Chooka Howells [Carlton ruckman] and three Jack Dyers [Richmond captain]'.

I didn't really need to swap and trade the cards because I had an assured steady supplier. This was 'Aunty Belle', if I remember her name aright. She was the sister of our Minister's wife, Mrs Rouch, and was the matron at the YMCA in Melbourne. The YMCA residents used to go through a dozen packets of Weeties each week. Each time Belle opened a new packet, she'd put aside its card for me. She then brought the week's cards to me at church the next Sunday. Each time she gave me a card that I didn't yet have, I'd paste it into the correct place in the 'famous footballers' scrapbook I'd written away to Weeties to obtain; and I'd have a good supply of duplicate cards to swap. Within a couple of months I'd become the envy of my classmates by completing the collection.

Swimming

Brighton was a bayside suburb; and we lived only a mile from the Middle Brighton beach, where the local municipal 'baths' were located. There were no baths at all, just a rectangular shark-proof seawater swimming enclosure measuring 50 metres wide and 150 metres long, with a boardwalk around the three seaward sides, and one- and three-metre diving boards on a platform at the deep end. During 1949 I began swimming there often.

I'd learnt to swim at Creswick during the 1948–49 summer holidays, in the Calembeen swimming hole, which we visited most days. The Calembeen lake was a deep flooded former gold-sluicing quarry. I'm not sure how I learned to swim there, but I guess it was through splashing round in the shallow water until I realised I could make forward progress without my feet on the bottom.

Somehow or another, without tuition and by watching other swimmers, I soon progressed from dog-paddle to 'overarm' and breaststroke. Breaststroke, I discovered, was my natural or 'default' stroke; and later, when I began swimming competitively at high school, that was the stroke in which I represented my house and school with some success.

What we now call 'freestyle' was then called the 'Australian crawl' and the 'six-beat crawl'. It was a stroke I consciously had to learn, because the sideways breathing behind the bow-wave made by my head and the smooth cycle of two arm-strokes to six leg-kicks took effort to acquire. I was only ever a mediocre freestyler; and I rarely swam more than 100 metres of freestyle at any one time until I began regular swimming sessions during the mid-1980s. I didn't become a really proficient freestyler for another 15 years after that, when I began daily 2-kilometre swimming sessions in my local pool in 2001. Nowadays its my preferred stroke, to the extent that I only occasionally swim a lap or two of breaststroke.

During Term 1 of 1949, our teacher, Mr Price, walked us to the baths one afternoon a week for the swimming lessons taught by the Education Department's specialist physical education teachers. I had a head-start over most of my classmates because I was among the few who could already swim. While most of them were learning the basics, I joined the select group being prepared for the Department's 'Junior' swimming certificate. The 'Junior' required us to dive in then swim 'overarm' across the 50-metre width of the baths without stopping. We also had to demonstrate that we could perform the Holger-Nielsen method of artificial resuscitation. I felt immensely proud of my accomplishments when my certificate was presented.

After that my parents allowed me to visit the baths on my own. I'd ride my bike there, leave it outside, pay my shilling entrance fee, then spend many happy hours swimming, diving, swimming underwater with my goggles on to see the fish, and doing 'bombs' to make the biggest splash possible. When I tired of that, I sat around sunbaking, yarning with various chums who also happened to be there, and generally watching the antics of everyone else. I loved all this so much that by the end of the year, if I wasn't delivering fruit and veggies, or doing chores at home, or at church or Sunday School, all my time was being spent at the Middle Brighton Baths.

Exit Ben Chifley and re-enter Bob Menzies

The final thing to be said of 1949 is that there was a change of federal governments a week before school broke up for the long summer vacation. The Liberal Party-Country Party coalition swept into power following the national elections on 10 December, replacing the Labor government of Ben Chifley, which had been in power for the previous eight years. It was the first election I can remember, perhaps because my classmates took sides. Most of them, the working-class lads who would soon be students at Brighton Tech, vociferously supported Labor, no doubt reflecting parental views. Like most of the boys from white-collar families, I supported Bob Menzies and his Liberal Party, who seemed more genteel than the Laborites.

I won't go into all the reasons for Labor's loss and the onset of the long Menzies ascendancy, Menzies' second time as Prime Minister; but, briefly, they included these: Labor's attempts to nationalise the banks; fear of Communist influence in various Labor-supporting trade unions; weariness with Labor's petrol rationing; and a long season of industrial strife which saw the Labor Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, send the troops into the coal mines as strike-breakers to ensure the continuance of electricity and gas supplies.

My parents were apolitical, and I didn't have a political thought in my head at that stage; but politics was something like the football: you had to support one of the sides. Party politics would come later for me, during university.

The great school reunion in the sky

At this point I'll leave Mr Price and all my 1949 classmates. I occasionally saw Mr Price over the next couple of years during my fruit and veggie delivery rounds. He'd be riding his bicycle home from school. He must have lived further over in East Brighton or Moorabbin, the next suburb. He'd ride along beside me for a while to ask how I was getting on at Gardenvale Central. He'd have known that I was destined for Melbourne High School after Gardenvale, and that I'd accordingly be one of his students who'd eventually do well scholastically.

Except for four who went on to Melbourne High, I rarely encountered any of my Brighton State School classmates ever again, even though I continued living in Brighton for another 12 years. I have no idea of what became of most of them. Some of them, like Bill Cross (with whom I still exchange Christmas cards) and Alan Tudor (whom I've occasionally seen at Melbourne High Old Boys' gatherings), will still be alive; but I guess that many of them will have gone off to the great school reunion in the sky.

That's the way of things when you're an old geezer, which is what survivors of the Brighton State School 'Class of 1949' all now are. We're all 86 going on 87, and we're getting used to the way our contemporaries keep 'hopping the twig'. Sooner or later, our own turn will come; and that's a good reason for me to persevere with these memoirs while I'm still able to.

5. SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE 1950S

What am I to make of the 1950s, the decade when I passed through secondary school and reached adulthood? Looking back on those years seven decades later, I realise they were epoch-changing times, though that wasn't always obvious to me as I lived through them.

World events

Globally, the 1950s began with heightened Cold War tensions. The Korean War erupted in June 1950 when the Communists from the north crossed the border into the south. The war lasted for the next three years, until an armistice in 1953; and of course the hostility between the Communist North and the democratic South continues to the present. It was the first of a series of proxy wars fought between the Soviet Union and its allies and the US and its allies in the decades before the Soviet system collapsed in 1989. The decades long Vietnam War was another. It began as the Viet Minh (Vietnamese Communists) succeeded in forcing the French colonial regime to withdraw from French Indochina — Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos — in 1954. In 1957 the Soviet-US struggle for world domination entered a new phase when the Soviets launched Sputnik, the first man-made satellite. That in turn triggered the 'space race'.

Meanwhile, the Eisenhower administration in the USA (1952–1960) created the impression that it was the enduring and stable status quo. Of course that wasn't the case, because, among others, the 1950s in the US was the decade of paranoid anti-Communism, of which McCarthyism was the ugly manifestation. At the same time, the national anti-Communist national mood could also be seen in the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the electric chair in 1953 after being found guilty of spying for the Soviets.

In the US, the 1950s also saw the rise of the Civil Rights movement. Events like the Little Rock school crisis in Arkansas in 1957 made headlines around the world, as Eisenhower sent in US Army troops to enforce Federal Court rulings on the desegregation of public schools.

In the meantime, too, the Soviet Union and its eastern European satellites were experiencing crises of their own making. The death of Stalin in 1953, and Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism in 1956, gave brief hope that Soviet Communism might be ameliorating, and that the Soviet and Western blocs might be entering a welcome season of détente. The Soviet invasion of Hungary in October 1956 to crush the Hungarian Revolution savagely soon gave the lie to that. The reformist Hungarian Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, was arrested and subsequently hanged for treason, seemingly on Kruschchev's orders as a warning to the rulers of the other Soviet satellites.

What else happened during the 50s? Here's a selection:

1) The double-helix structure of DNA was discovered in 1953, changing forever the science of genetics.
2) The next year, 1954, saw the advent of the transistor radio. Very soon, many teenagers owned one. As they became ever smaller, the owners walked everywhere with their 'trannies' pressed to their ears — like they now do with their mobile phones.
3) In 1955 the Salk vaccine for poliomyelitis became available, ending the cyclical epidemics of one of the world's worst and most permanently debilitating infectious

diseases. Sadly, it's now making a comeback, aided by the anti-vaxers who won't allow their children to be vaccinated.

4) In 1955, too, Rock & Roll music burst upon the world and soon became the prevailing mode of pop culture.
5) In October-November 1956 we saw the Suez Crisis, when the UK, France and Israel sent troops into Egypt to secure the Suez Canal after the Egyptians had nationalised it. Political pressure from the US, the USSR and the UN prompted them to make a humiliating withdrawal nine days later. The fighting between the Egyptians and Israelis nevertheless continued in the Sinai region as the second Arab-Israeli war.
6) The Treaty of Rome established the European Common Market in 1957. This free-trade organisation subsequently evolved into the present European Union.
7) In Cuba, the revolution fought by a conglomeration of nationalists, students, socialists and Marxists brought Fidel Castro to power at the end of 1958. When Castro re-modelled his government along Marxist lines, the US found it had a Communist nation on its very doorstep.
8) Generally, the 1950s were a decade of progressive decolonisation as new nations in Asia and Africa emerged after a century or more of colonial rule by European powers, mainly the UK, France and Belgium. In Asia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos gained their independence in 1954, and the Malayan Federation (which then included Singapore) in 1957. In Africa, Libya became the first nation to gain its independence in 1951, followed by Sudan, Morocco and Tunisia in 1957. In 1957, too, Ghana became the first of the Sub-Saharan nations to gain its independence. Many others followed during the 1960s.

Australian events

In Australia and its territories, we moved at a more leisurely pace, and many of us remember the 1950s as a boring era. Despite that, certain events with far-reaching effects claimed our attention. Here are some that I remember well:

- The post-war 'baby boom' became a discernible demographic bulge as the 'boomers' reached school age. Many new schools were built to accommodate them.
- The post-war trickle of immigration became a flood as migrants from the UK, Ireland, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, and the Baltic states sought new opportunities in Australia, many of them settling in Victoria. New suburbs sprang up to house them, and Melbourne sprawled ever outwards.
- Australia entered the 'long boom', a 30-year period of sustained economic growth as new manufacturing industries were established to produce the mass-produced consumer products demanded by an affluent society. Arguably, the most iconic of these was the Holden motor car, the first motor vehicle entirely designed and manufactured in Australia.
- In Australia's largest external territory, Papua New Guinea, Mount Lamington erupted in 1951, killing some 3,000 people. Two years later, in 1953, the last two Australian *kiaps* (government patrol officers) to be killed on duty were ambushed and hacked to death near Telefomin, a remote government outpost in uncontrolled territory in the Thurnwald Range of the southern Sepik District.

- In early 1954 the Queen and her consort, the Duke of Edinburgh, spent eight weeks touring Australia for the first time, to tumultuous acclaim wherever they went.
- The Queen had only been gone a month when Vladimir Petrov, an official at the Soviet embassy in Canberra, sought asylum in Australia. He claimed that a Soviet spy ring was active in Australia. The defection of Petrov and his wife led to the Royal Commission on Espionage later that year; and that in turn served to discredit the Labor Party and its leader, Dr H.V. Evatt, while boosting the stocks of the Liberal-Country Party coalition of R.G. Menzies.
- In 1955 the Australian Labor Party suffered a catastrophic split when its mainly Catholic and anti-Communist faction left to form the Democratic Labor Party. The DLP, believing the ALP was under Communist influence, directed its electoral preferences to the Liberal-Country Party coalition. This effectively kept the ALP out of government for the next 17 years.
- After the Royal Tour of 1954, the greatest public spectacle of the 1950s was the summer Olympic Games. Hosted by Melbourne, the Games ran for 18 days during November-December 1956.
- Two months before the Olympics, television was introduced into Australia in September 1956. The Olympics gave the new medium a tremendous boost. People bought TV sets so they could watch the Games. Those of us who didn't yet have TV at home clustered outside electrical goods shops to watch the action on the sets in the store windows.
- In 1958 the Adaminaby Dam was completed. The dam was one of the major projects of the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme, the largest engineering project ever undertaken in Australia. The purpose of the scheme was to trap snow-melt water (which would otherwise have run down the Snowy River into the sea in Victoria), divert it inland along pipelines drilled through the Snowy Mountains, use it to generate electricity, then release it into the Murray River and Murrumbidgee headwaters for irrigation.
- Construction of the Sydney Opera House began in May 1959. Dogged by much controversy, construction would take the next 14 years. The Queen eventually opened the Opera House in October 1973.

Family and personal events — an overview

Much happened in my own family, too. We changed houses in 1953, moving from our Durrant Street to our Male Street home. The first of my siblings, Ruth, married in December 1956 and produced the first two of my parents' 15 grandchildren the next year. Dad spent 18 months in the UK during 1958–1959 as the Australian Botanical Liaison Officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London. In early 1959 David became the second sibling to leave home when he went off to agricultural college, at Longeranong near Horsham in the Wimmera district. Late that year the last and longest-lived of my grandparents, my Grandma Willis, died at age 87.

In 1950 I began my secondary education at Gardenvale Central School; and I completed my schooling in 1955 after four years at Melbourne High School. In my second year at MHS, 1953, I became friends with a classmate, Tony Irvine, who would be my closest friend until his death 14 years ago at age 70. I began teaching Sunday School, reluctantly, at the Male Street Methodist Church in 1953 and was later, in 1959 and again reluctantly, appointed as

the Sunday School superintendent. In 1954 I took my first holiday independent of the family when with three MHS chums — Tony Irvine, Ian Riley and Peter Walford — we rode our bikes to and from Wilson's Promontory during the first term school vacation, a round trip of 440 kilometres or 275 miles as we measured distances then.

I made my first trip interstate in 1955 when I hitchhiked to Sydney and back with Tony Irvine. The next year, 1956, I entered university for the first time but, not enjoying the experience, at the end of the year I joined the salaried workforce as a cadet reporter on the Melbourne *Sun News-Pictorial* newspaper. This soon turned out to be a false start in journalism. I began dating my first steady girlfriend in 1956; and after she dumped me, I went on to my second in 1957, and then my third in 1958. The third, Margaret, would become my lifelong partner and the intellectual, emotional and moral sheet anchor for the rest of my life. I entered teachers' college with Margaret in 1959. I undertook the last of the one-year primary teacher training courses run by the Education Department; and when I'd completed that, I returned to university to finish my degree. Margaret stayed on at the college for another two years, because she was enrolled in the three-year infant teachers' course.

Gardenvale Central School

Gardenvale Central School, in Landcox Street, East Brighton, was a strange institution by present-day understanding. It was a full primary school with all years from kindergarten to Grade 6, but above and apart from them were Grades 7 and 8, known as Forms 1 and 2.

Forms 1 and 2 were the first two years of secondary school and followed a curriculum like that of the nearest high schools, Hampton and Mordialloc. The subjects on offer were English, Mathematics (which included Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry), General Science, History, Geography, Latin and French (one or the other but not both), Art, Technology (not called that, but included woodwork for the boys and cookery and sewing for the girls). We boys spent one morning a week doing woodwork, in the sloyd workshop at Brighton State School — familiar territory for me. The girls did their cookery and sewing somewhere else; I can't remember where, but while we were away at woodwork, they went to some primary school that had facilities for teaching those subjects.

Each of Gardenvale's secondary years, Forms 1 and 2, had four separate classes numbered 'A' to 'D' and streamed according to academic ability as determined by IQ tests. Students in the 'A' class were supposed to have been the smartest. I was placed in Form 1A for Grade 7 in 1950 and continued into Form 2A for Grade 8 in 1951. I rather doubt the validity of the streaming system because the 'B' to 'D' classes contained many students who were just as smart as me and subsequently proved it through their university studies and professional careers.

At Gardenvale, the 'A' and 'C' classes learned Latin, while the 'B' and 'D' classes took French. Apart from that, the curriculum for all four classes was the same. I would like to have learnt French, but there was no chance of that because I was in a Latin class. I enjoyed Latin, and readily learnt its complex grammatical rules about the declension of nouns, pronouns and adjectives according to six cases. And then there were the verbs, of which there were four separate conjugations with different verb-endings for active and passive voice, person (first, second & third), singular and plural, and tense (present, past, future etc). I rather enjoyed the systematic logic of Latin grammar, which helped me understand English grammar better.

In the Maths classes, I enjoyed Geometry but took some time to get the hang of Algebra. I soon realised I'd never be a mathematician because algebra required a level of abstract thought that remained forever just out of reach. Throughout my secondary schooling my Algebra marks were always well below the class average. In Arithmetic there wasn't much new to learn, but one process we were shown was using the arithmetical means for

determining the square root of numbers. We only ever did it the once, and I've never used it since. I recall that it was something like a complex form of long division.

I enjoyed Art, in which we were taught to paint with water colours. Music was also 'taught' but, as in primary school, it consisted of singing in unison the songs the music teacher wished us to sing. There was a school choir in which I sang in both my years at Gardenvale. It performed at an annual concert for school choirs held in the Brighton Town Hall in Wilson Street. Sport was on Friday afternoons at Princes Park in South Caulfield, with cricket in the summer, football in the winter and athletics in the lead-up to the annual Central Schools athletics carnival at the Fitzroy Football Club ground. (I wasn't an athlete yet, but I was a member of the marching team both years. Marching as 'athletics'? A quaint idea nowadays, but back then, all government school students did much marching around their parade grounds; and a well-turned-out marching team moving as one was a pleasing sight.)

Riding my bike to school

To get to Gardenvale Central, I rode my bike. Most other students did too. That was because, as a 'central' school, Gardenvale's two secondary years drew their students from the surrounding suburbs — North, Middle and East Brighton, South Caulfield, Elsternwick, Bentleigh, Ormond, McKinnon and Moorabbin. The Willis home in Durrant Street was only 1,500 metres from the school, but to get there I had to ride along busy Hampton Street, then cross the even busier Nepean Highway — Melbourne's main southern arterial route — at the complex set of traffic lights where Hampton, Bay and Milroy Streets converged on the highway at the 'Tommy Bent' statue on an island at the middle of the intersection. (The statue, a local landmark, commemorated Sir Thomas Bent (1838–1909), a former Mayor of Brighton and Premier of Victoria. He was a land speculator who did well from Brighton's booming property market in the 1870s–80s.) The trip to and from school took about 10 minutes, depending on whether I had to wait for the traffic lights. Surprisingly now, I used to ride home for lunch, which gave me a welcome 40-minute break at home between the morning and afternoon sessions at school. When school had finished, I rode straight to my fruit and vegetable delivery job without going home.

Looking back on all those rides to and from school, I realise I risked my life every time I ventured forth, because even then, 72 years ago, the motor traffic was always heavy along Hampton Street, Nepean Highway and the other nearby thoroughfares that I sometimes used — Bay Street, Hawthorn Road, Union Street, Centre Road & North Road. The worst that ever happened to me, however, was being swooped by magpies for the first time on my way home for lunch one day. It happened as I rode through a clump of pine trees at the western end of Hurlingham Park. Suddenly two magpies began dive-bombing me from two directions at once, missing my head by millimetres. I'd never heard about nesting maggies' swooping ways before, so I was terrified. I dumped my bike beside the track to take shelter beneath a nearby abandoned car body. The magpies perched on a branch about five metres away, eyeing me malevolently with their beady red eyes. After several minutes, I realised I might be there all afternoon if I waited until they'd gone, so I made a dash for it. I grabbed my bike and pedalled frantically from the trees to the footpath along Nepean Highway. The maggies pursued me but gave up the chase after about 50 metres.

Aspiring to be a Melbourne High School boy

As mentioned in the previous chapter, my reason for attending Gardenvale Central was that it was the nearest feeder school for Melbourne High School. Dad and his older brother, Uncle

Ru, had both attended MHS; and throughout my primary school years there had always been an assumption that I'd go there too. When I was a small boy on outings into Melbourne by train, Mum would point out the school on its hill above the south bank of the Yarra River. "That's Daddy's school!" she'd exclaim with pride. The unspoken corollary was, "And one day it'll be yours too."

The most common way of being admitted to MHS was to attend a Central School first. Seven of these were located in the suburbs south of the Yarra River — our region of Melbourne. As well as Gardenvale, they were in East Malvern (known as 'Lloyd Street'), Elwood, Gardiner, Middle Park, North Caulfield and Toorak (Prahran). North of the Yarra were another four: East Kew, Footscray, Moreland and Princes Hill (Carlton). Between them, these eleven schools provided most of the students entering Victoria's three selective high schools, namely MHS in South Yarra, its sister school, MacRobertson ('MacRob') Girls' High School, in Albert Park, and University High School in Parkville near Melbourne University.

Transition from a Central School to MHS, MacRob and Uni High wasn't automatic. You had to score sufficiently well in an entrance exam, which comprised a battery of IQ tests. I don't remember much about this, but I think we took the tests in our home school. The one question I remember was in a multiple-choice vocabulary test: *"What does the word 'cede' refer to: (1) plants, (2) territory, (3) the alphabet, or (4) success?"* I'd never seen or heard the word before and answered wrongly. Perhaps half the boys exiting Form 2 at Gardenvale made it to MHS, and half the girls to MacRob. Of the rest, maybe a dozen went on to elite private schools like Wesley, Scotch and Methodist Ladies' College; some went to Brighton Tech or one of the other technical schools; others to Hampton High; and several joined the workforce after finding jobs in local factories.

Getting used to girls again

The classes at Gardenvale were unsegregated, though the girls always sat in the rows of desks on the left of the room, while the boys sat to the right. After the 'monastic' last three years in sex-segregated classes at primary school, I found that sitting in class with girls again was unsettling. The girls tended to titter if we boys gave wrong answers. We were aware that they used to natter together about us, no doubt finding fault. One of them, Margot Pearce, whom we nicknamed 'Fierce Pearce', was intellectually precocious, opinionated and outspoken. She kept a diary in which she listed all the boys and made notes about each. One of the boys got hold of it one day. We laughed over it during the next recess, but I wasn't flattered by my entry: *"Ian Willis — one of the smaller boys, cheeky, not very bright."*

I should say here that Margot — long since deceased — sat next to and was the inseparable buddy of Eftychia ('Effie') Moutafis (later Mrs Antoniou), one of only four non-Anglo students in a class of 40. Effie's family were immigrants from Greece, originally from Smyrna (Izmir) in Turkey, and then Athens after the Turks 'ethnically cleansed' Smyrna in 1922. We boys were all a little afraid of Effie. She was forthright, tough, good at sport — in both the school softball and netball teams — and capable of giving most of us a beating in a fist-fight if we'd been silly enough to provoke that. Effie went on to MacRob, then became a secretary-manager in a commercial firm before marrying and raising a family. In 1990 Effie was awarded the OAM (Medal of the Order of Australia) for services to the Greek community.

Decades later, in Canberra in our fifties, Effie and I met up again by chance at a function at the Greek Embassy. We renewed our friendship and still maintain contact with each other. A couple of times a year we lunch together at the Hellenic Club. Effie's a keen

student of public affairs, so I always appreciate hearing her views; but, inevitably, the conversation will sooner or later rotate to our classmates and teachers at Gardenvale

I've also kept in touch with two other Gardenvale classmates, who, like Effie, went on to distinguished careers of public service: John Taylor and Jim Mathieson (1938–2023), each of whom was at MHS with me 1952–1955. John became a leading gynaecological urologist and Jim an electrical engineer who managed major infrastructure projects. I appreciate my contact with these two old friends. Like Effie, they're both people of outstanding character, first-rate leaders and loyal friends.

Our other three non-Anglo classmates at Gardenvale were Hannah Wolf, who was German Jewish; Michael Balint, who was Hungarian Jewish; and Malcolm Kirkwood, a post-war Jewish immigrant from England. All three were academic high-achievers. Hannah went on to MacRob then graduated in Science from Melbourne University. She later settled in the US. Michael and Malcolm both went on to MHS with me. Michael studied medicine and subsequently became a suburban GP; and Malcolm, a gifted mathematician and chess player, became an actuary with AMP Insurance.

Part of the adjustment I had to make to sitting in class with girls again was realising that in in most activities they were generally much better than us boys. They were more articulate; their bookwork was neater; their general knowledge was superior; they knew more songs than we did and sang more sweetly; and their artwork put ours to shame. They were also academically more accomplished. In Forms 1A in 1950 and 2A in 1951 at the mid-year and end-of-year examinations they consistently filled the top five or six places in the class both years. Over all eight academic subjects — English, Latin, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, General Science, Geography, History — they'd average 'high 80s–90s' out of 100. By contrast, I was at or near the class average of about 75. At my final exams in December 1951, for which I studied hard and made a special effort, my aim was to lift my average to 80%. I was disappointed to score only 79.5%, falling short by a half mark. The top girls, Alison Forrest and Hannah Wolf, were well up in the 90s.

The two smartest girls at Gardenvale

Alison was Dux of the school in 1951, and so her name was inscribed on the honour board in the school foyer. She'd beaten Hannah into second place by half a mark. Some 59 years later I met them both at a Gardenvale reunion, which my friends Jeff Bird with Effie, John and Jim had organised. Hannah had returned to Australia from her home in the US to be with us. I happened to sit next to Alison at the luncheon. She told me that until earlier that day she'd never seen her name on the honour roll. She, Hannah and several other friends from 2A had gone into the foyer to inspect it.

Alison and I had an amiable conversation. She said she'd gone to MacRob, left school after Leaving Certificate in Form 5, and then went to Toorak Teachers' College (which Margaret and I both attended later). After teaching for a while, she'd become a housewife and mother. She'd married twice, outliving both husbands, and had five children. She asked me what I'd done with my life. I explained that I, too, had gone to TTC, become a teacher, married a fellow TTC student who became a school principal, and we now had three children and seven grandchildren.

Alison wanted to know all about Margaret, so I explained that we'd grown up within 200 metres of each other and had attended the same church and Sunday School, that Margaret was a Hampton High girl who'd spent a year as a pupil-teacher at the Wilson Street school before TTC, that she'd taught in many schools in Victoria, Papua New Guinea, England and Canberra, that she'd climbed the schools hierarchy as senior teacher, deputy principal, principal and finally head of ACT Education's literacy & numeracy testing branch.

Meanwhile, she'd upgraded her qualifications to degree level — the hard way, as an external student of Deakin University. Alison seemed much impressed. I was pleased by that because I've always been very proud of Margaret's attainments — as a student, a teacher, a school principal, an education bureaucrat, a wife, mother, grandmother, home-maker, friend, wise counsellor, independent thinker, and volunteer with community organisations. In fact Margaret is the most accomplished person I've ever known.

After Alison inquired how I was spending my retirement, I said I'd become an historian and was publishing books of history. "Where can I buy your books?" she asked. "Not in bookshops," I replied, "because they're written for niche markets, not the general public; but if you really wish to see them, you'll find them online if you search for 'Howie-Willis', my authorial name."

I felt a little sad for Alison and the other Gardenvale girls of our cohort who'd lived lives similar to hers. They were such able, outstanding students they could have done well in any university course they might have chosen to enter and then gone on to practise successfully in one of the elite professions. Unfortunately for the young women of their generation, however, educational and career opportunities were much more circumscribed than for their male contemporaries. Teaching, nursing and secretarial work were the main options; and after a few years of that, the common assumption was that they'd want to leave the salaried workforce to become wives, homemakers and mothers.

That, too, had been Margaret's destiny. As soon as she married me, she'd been forced to resign from the Education Department, which meant that she lost her seniority and superannuation entitlements. She accepted that her lot in life would be as a housewife and mum. But then we went to PNG, which opened new and unexpected career opportunities for her.

Patty Burford

Another former 1A-2A classmate I enjoyed chatting with at the Gardenvale reunion was Patty Burford. She was one of the few Gardenvale girls I'd seen in the intervening decades. I'd met her again back in 1979. That had been at the wedding of her daughter, Julie, who had married Frank Woodward, the youngest son of Jack and Mary Woodward, dear friends of ours from our time in Lae in the early 1970s. Jack and Mary had returned home to New Zealand after leaving Lae, but Frank had studied at an art school in Melbourne — Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, I recall — where he had met Patty's daughter. When the young couple married, we were on the invitation list, so we flew down from Canberra for the occasion.

As we arrived at the church, Patty greeted us warmly. I was amazed to see her. "I was wondering if the 'Dr Ian Willis' on our invitation list was the same Ian Willis who'd been with me at Gardenvale," she said. "Yes, the same chap," I replied, "and delighted to see you again after so long, Pat." They were probably the first words we'd ever exchanged, although we'd sat in adjacent desks at Gardenvale.

Later, during the wedding reception at Olinda in the Dandenong Ranges, we had a long conversation, each telling the other how our lives had panned out over the past 28 years. Patty was surprised that I'd become 'Dr' Willis, because she didn't remember me as one of the sharpest pencils in the Gardenvale box. I had to point out that I was a slow developer. I hadn't discovered that history was my true vocation until I was about 30, and then I'd taken ten years to acquire the appropriate academic qualifications.

Meeting Patty, Alison and Hannah again was a wonderful experience. I realised what charming, accomplished women they were — ladies (and I use that word advisedly) I could be proud to be associated with. They mightn't have acquired higher degrees like I had, but

they'd lived equally worthy lives and their own achievements as home-makers, mothers and family heads were as impressive as mine and any of their other male classmates who'd meanwhile become doctors, engineers, university lecturers, accountants, pharmacists and businessmen.

Madam Bindley's Ball

One of the memorable regular events at Gardenvale Central was the annual ball in the Caulfield Town Hall. Many of the students took part in this extravaganza, the girls all dressed in long frocks with their hair waved and tied up, and we boys wore our Sunday best suits with collar and tie, and our hair slicked down with brilliantine. We were taught various dance routines; and there were also song-and-dance acts into which some of us were dragooned. One I took part in was singing and performing the actions for the 1948 Stan Jones cowboy song, *'Ghost riders in the sky'*. Another was the 1947 Arthur Godfrey hit, the *'Too Fat Polka'*, the chorus of which went *"I don't want her, you can have her, she's too fat for me!"* (It could never be sung at a school these days because it would be considered 'hate speech' by overweight teachers and students.)

The impresario for the ball was a middle-aged woman who went under the name of 'Madam Bindley'. Madam Bindley was short, stocky, bespectacled and had a frizzy mop of sandy-red hair, which, reputedly, was a wig. 'Madam Bindley's Ball' was an annual fixture at various Melbourne schools, so I guess that staging them was her job. She was a martinet. I suppose she had to be to get her mostly shy and unwilling students to learn their routines. The first dance-teaching session in Form 1 occurred early in first term. My mate Alan Tudor and I knew hardly anyone at this stage, let alone girls, so when Madam Bindley issued the order, "Choose your partners," we chose each other and stood together. No same-sex partners in Madam Bindley's ball, however! She yelled at us to get away from each other, then assigned us to girls who didn't yet have partners. The girl she paired me with was a sweet, shy, slight, dark-haired lass called Kathleen ('Katie') Breen.

Katie and I then danced with each other for the next three months of weekly rehearsals, and together in all our finery at the gala performance at the ball. We were so shy that in all that time we never spoke with each other. After Katie had finished at MacRob, and I at MHS, we attended English lectures together at Melbourne University in 1956, by which time she was strikingly handsome, stylish and sophisticated. We still didn't speak. She'd probably forgotten who I was, because she showed no sign of recognition; and after four years more of single-sex schooling at MHS, I was very shy speaking to girls. I wasn't going to embarrass either Katie or myself by saying that six years earlier Madam Bindley had done her best to bring us together.

Jeff Bird

At Gardenvale I made two new special friends. After Alan Tudor had been re-assigned to Form 1C mid-year in 1950, we drifted apart. We remained friends for years, but we each found other friends with whom we spent more time. Jeffrey Bird (1938–2012), nicknamed 'Fred', became my buddy. He was a popular, venturesome lad, so I felt proud that he wished to be my mate. Among other adventures, we joined various 'Gardie' boys in swinging on the 'Tarzan' rope suspended from a gum tree hanging over Elster Creek just below the Hawthorn Road-Union Street intersection. Sadly for me, Jeff transferred to Williamstown High School at the end of the year. I caught up with him again at MHS in Form 6, because WHS didn't have a matriculation class; and so WHS boys wishing to go on to university used to spend a

year at MHS so they could matriculate. (For the same reason, many boys from Camberwell, Dandenong, Hampton and Mordialloc High Schools came to MHS for the Form 6 year.)

Jeff went on to Melbourne University, graduated in Civil Engineering, and became the city engineer at Sunshine in Melbourne's west. He also became involved in municipal politics and served a term as the Mayor of Williamstown. A gregarious chap, he had many other community involvements, including being a Rotary district governor. I used to meet him at MHS reunions; and then in 2010 he, Jim Mathieson, Effie Antoniou and John Taylor organised the Gardenvale reunion at which I had my conversation with Alison née Forrest. On that occasion, Jeff had kindly driven me from the school to the club in Bentleigh where the luncheon was held. He later drove me to Gardenvale station so I could catch the train to Hampton, where I was staying with Sue and David Sherrard, Margaret's younger sister and brother-in-law.

Jeff died two years later from cancer. I flew down from Canberra for the day to attend his memorial service in the Williamstown Town Hall on 15 October 2012. I'd spoken with him only a couple of weeks earlier, when I'd rung to say I was thinking of him. "I'm pretty crook, mate!" he'd said when he asked how he was feeling. I met his widow, Elaine, and their children after the service. They seemed pleased to think that I'd wanted to make a special trip from Canberra to be with them to celebrate Jeff's life and many achievements.

Geoffrey Brodie

In 1951, I made another firm friend, who replaced Jeff as my special buddy. This was Geoffrey Robert Brodie, with whom I shared a desk in Form 2A. We had much in common because we were both from devout 'church' families. He was a Baptist and attended the Brighton Baptist Church on the corner of Bay and Cochrane Streets. We occasionally used to visit each other at the weekends, and we played cricket against each other in summer, each of us being very junior members of our church teams. I spent more time at Geoff's house than he did at mine because he had a table-tennis table, and I'd recently become a keen player after learning the game in our Sunday School Hall as a member of the Male Street Methodist youth group. Especially during school holidays, when I wasn't working as the Palamaras' delivery boy, I spent many hours visiting the Brodie home in Berkeley Grove, a couple of doors from Hurlingham Park, to play table tennis with Geoff.

Geoff and I lost touch with each other after leaving Gardenvale because he didn't go on to MHS with me but instead went to Brighton Tech. He'd decided to be a carpenter, so the Tech was a better option. He was the only boy in Form 2A to go there, because apart from two who went to Wesley and two to Scotch the rest of us went to MHS. After completing Form 4, Geoff served his apprenticeship then worked as a self-employed carpenter and joiner. During the 1960s Mum used to engage him periodically to do installation jobs at our Male Street home. I still have the bookshelves he built for the family room, which I retrieved when the house was sold in 1997. They now accommodate Margaret's books in Tony's old bedroom.

Which 'Friend'?

Geoff was indirectly the reason why Margaret and I began dating. He invited me to his 21st birthday party in November 1958, held in his parents' home. The invitation was for 'Ian Willis and Friend', so which 'Friend' should I ask to accompany me? I'd recently broken up with 'the fair Nancy' (this name a family joke), who'd been my steady girlfriend for the previous 18 months, so I was currently 'Friendless'. I thought about which girl from the

church I might ask — they were the only girls I knew apart from my sisters — and then it dawned on me, "Why not Margaret Vale?"

Margaret and I had known each other remotely since early childhood; we both attended the church youth group; we were both teaching in the Sunday School; and earlier in the year, when I was still working as a *Sun* cadet reporter, I'd occasionally travelled home by train from work with her. My habit was to catch the 11.00 p.m. train from the Flinders Street station after finishing my shift. I'd sit in the compartment that would be nearest the exit gate at the North Brighton station. At Prahran, three stops down the line, Margaret would sometimes be waiting to get into the same compartment. She was on her way home from Prahran Tech, where she was studying two subjects at night school — English and Craft (dressmaking) — in hope of eventually matriculating. Seeing me seated there, she'd join me because she was nervous about travelling alone late at night. We were each shy of the other, but we'd try to make small talk for the 20 minutes before reaching our station; and then we'd walk up Bay Street and down Male Street together.

To my shame, I'd bid Margaret good-night at my front gate, whereas I should have offered to walk the next 200 metres with her to her home around the corner in Edgar Street. The reason I didn't was my shyness and reluctance to appear 'forward'. We probably weren't attracted to each other yet, but I feared she might think I was trying to be 'fresh' (the word she used to indicate 'making unwelcome advances'). I've regretted my immaturity and dearth of gallantry ever since. I could so easily have asked politely, "Would you like me to walk the rest of the way with you to see you safely inside your front gate?" Did she think my not offering ungallant? She has never said so, but I guess she'd have accepted my offer if I'd overcome my qualms to make it.

Anyway, I plucked up the courage to ask Margaret if she'd accompany me to Geoff's 21st celebration. I was greatly relieved when she agreed, apparently without demur. (Years later, she told me she'd asked her mother if she should accept my invitation; and her mother said she should because Ian Willis was a nice young chap.) To do things properly, I ordered a taxi to take us to and from the party; and I might even have paid the florist in Bay Street to prepare a small corsage for her to wear. I don't remember much about the party but it must have been a successful date because shortly afterwards I received another 21st birthday party invitation with the same 'and Friend' wording. Once again, I asked Margaret if she'd be my 'Friend', and she readily agreed. That went well, too, so I asked her if she'd like to attend the movies with me.

The film we saw the next week was Lawrence Olivier playing opposite Marilyn Monroe in the 1957 romantic comedy, *The Prince and the Showgirl*. That was another happy outing. I remember I bought Margaret a box of 'Malteser' chocolates to munch during the film. Instead of eating them herself, she kept force-feeding me with them until my cheeks were bulging. This was a good sign! She was confident enough in my company to play these amusing little games with me. We agreed to see another movie the next week; and soon after that we went to the circus together. By then we were 'going steady' — one more idiom of those times. We'd begun holding hands on our excursions; and I'd started daydreaming about her at work, looking forward to the next time we'd be together. So thanks, Geoff Brodie, for having been the inadvertent agent through whom a 64-year relationship began!

Geoff's own story didn't end so happily. I lost touch with him again after his 21st, but when Margaret and I married 3½ years later I invited him to the wedding. He attended 'without Friend'; and then we lost contact once more. About four years later, by which time Margaret and I were teaching at Brandi High School in Papua New Guinea, we were home on leave and staying in Brighton with Mum and Dad. Mum mentioned that Geoff had recently done a carpentry job for her, so I contacted him and we arranged to meet. By this stage he was married and living over in East Bentleigh, Mount Waverley or one of those other newer

south-eastern suburbs. I went there a few days later for morning tea. I met his wife and baby and was pleased that they seemed happy together. Some months after this, by which time we were back at Brandi, Mum wrote to say that Geoff had visited her with distressing news. He'd come home from work one day to an empty house. His wife and baby were gone, and the house was stripped of furniture. That was the last I heard of Geoff. Perhaps I should have written to commiserate. But what could I have said? "So sorry to learn that your wife has vamoosed with the baby and furniture"?

I don't know what subsequently happened to Geoff. Some online searching just now has revealed that he died on 6 July 1992 at age 54 and was buried in his grandfather Brodie's grave in the Wangaratta Cemetery in north-eastern Victoria. His mother had died nine years earlier, his father survived him by six years, and both were buried in the same family grave. Without going to the trouble and expense of purchasing a copy of Geoff's death certificate — which I might be ineligible to obtain anyway — I won't learn why he died so young. A road accident? Industrial mishap? Cancer? Stroke? Heart attack? Or even suicide? I'll probably never know the answer; but whatever it is, Geoff was the first of my close friends to die.

Teachers

I remember many of my Gardenvale teachers quite well. They were a variegated bunch. Here, briefly, are those I remember best:

- **Edward Henry Townsend**, nicknamed 'Butch', was our Form 1A 'form master' or homeroom teacher. He also taught us Maths, which meant he had to introduce us to Algebra and Geometry. He was the retired Principal of Williamstown High School, but because of a post-war teacher shortage had come out of retirement to teach at Gardenvale. He was probably in his mid-70s. He lived somewhere along the Sandringham railway line and used to walk to and from the school from the North Brighton station each day, about a mile (1.6 kilometres) each way. He died 'in harness' the next year, 1951, of a heart attack I recall; and so the Gardenvale Principal, Mr H.G. Bretherton, conducted a special school assembly to commemorate his service to the school. (Mr Bretherton, by the way, was the self-same chap who'd been the Brighton State School headmaster during all my time there. He arrived at Gardenvale at the same time I did, but never showed any sign of having remembered me from my primary school years.)

  At the end of 1950, 'Butch' wrote in my 'Pupil's Record Book' that I was 'a steady conscientious worker [who] will achieve success'. This book, commonly known as the 'report book', had to be taken home and signed by a parent. The books went with us from year to year and school to school throughout our secondary schooling. Margaret and I still have ours. They make interesting reading nowadays. 'Butch', I think, erred on the side of generosity because my marks were mediocre. My subject averages were only a couple of percentage points above the class averages.

  Interestingly, my History marks from Form 1 through to Form 4 were usually at the class average. They gave no hint that I was an historian-in-the-making. Only in Forms 5 and 6 were they appreciably higher. By then I'd consciously decided to specialise in History and was studying two History subjects — 'British' and 'Modern'. I mightn't have realised yet that history was my vocation, but I greatly appreciated the knowledge of the past that I was acquiring.

- **Mr Vaughan** (I never knew his first name) taught us Latin in Form 1. I liked him and enjoyed his classes. He wasn't liked by some he'd taught earlier in Grade 5 at

Gardenvale, when he was said to have picked on my mate Jeff Bird. I had no complaints about him, however, and he gave me marks well above the class averages.

- **Geoffrey Lewis Lloyd** (1921–2005), a former RAAF pilot with an excellent wartime record of service overseas, was our Form 1 History and Form 2 Geography teacher. At age 29, he was perhaps the youngest of the Gardenvale secondary teachers. He was an excellent, enthusiastic teacher of both subjects, but I was neutral about him — neither liked nor disliked him. He only ever gave me average marks. Short, stocky and good-looking, he was one of the more popular staff members. He followed us to MHS in 1953, then taught there for many years and ran the MHS Air Training Corps. He subsequently became a school inspector. He never taught me at MHS and never gave any hint of having remembered me from Gardenvale, but those who were in his MHS classes liked him greatly.
- **Mrs Sherrington** taught us English in Form 1. A genteel older Scottish lady with grown-up children, she was an enthusiast for her subject and enthused us. I enjoyed her classes, but only achieved average marks.
- **Thomas ('Tommy') David Gronow** (1890–1977), a diminutive elderly Welshman hardly much taller than I was, taught us General Science in both Forms 1 and 2. "Be kind an' 'elpful," he often enjoined us. One of our classmates, John Callow, a personable, witty lad greatly admired by the girls, was an excellent mimic. While we were sitting in the Science room waiting for Tommy to arrive, John would entertain us by mimicking Tommy's strange accent: "Se'en times ele'en is se'enty-se'en; and ele'en times ele'en is ele'enty-ele'en."

  Tommy strapped us more than the other Gardenvale teachers, who rarely resorted to corporal punishment; but we boys didn't greatly mind him whacking us. First, it didn't hurt much; second, he had an unusual strapping action, which was comical to watch. As he swung the strap down with his right hand, he'd jerk his right knee up beneath the hand of his victim. If the victim moved his hand to one side in the moment before impact, Tommy would strap his own knee. Apart from such entertainment, I enjoyed Tommy's classes, especially when he conducted an experiment to illustrate a scientific principle — as when he collapsed a kerosene can with a vacuum pump to demonstrate the force of air pressure.

  Many decades later I was amazed to learn that Tommy had been highly decorated for bravery in the British Army during World War I. As a second-lieutenant of the Border Regiment, he'd been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Cross *and Bar* for gallantry under fire on the Western Front.
- **Mr Duverger** was our English teacher in Form 2. He'd taught me for a time as a relief teacher in Grade 5 in 1948. He'd picked on me a lot then, singling me out for strappings for purported infringements I wasn't aware of having committed. On one occasion he'd pointed me out to the regular class teacher — Mr Dunell? Mr Kennedy? — as someone he regarded as 'badly behaved'. On another occasion, he was conducting an oral English session, something few other teachers had ever done, on the topic 'Is corporal punishment necessary in schools?' He asked various boys what they thought. Some said they agreed — 'Keeps us well behaved', 'Do wrong and you get punished' etc. When he asked me what I thought, I said, "It's wrong!" His interest piqued, he asked why I thought so. I couldn't explain what made it wrong but simply felt it was, so I mumbled something inadequate like, "I don't approve of it."

Mr Duverger was new to Gardenvale in 1951. When he strode into Form 2A for the first English lesson of the year, my heart sank. He looked around the class then pointed at me. "I know you, don't I?" "Yes, sir," I replied, fearing another year of being picked on. As things turned out, he left me alone; and I did my best not to be noticed.

- **Roy Douglas Payne** was our form master in 1951, and he also taught us Maths and Latin. We therefore saw a great deal of him. He was a good teacher but had a fiery, explosive temper. A wrong answer sometimes tipped him over the edge into incandescent rage. He never lost his temper with me, but I dreaded him asking me to recite the noun declensions or verb conjugations in Latin classes. For instance, he might begin the lesson by saying, "Ian Willis, stand and give the declension for 'porta', meaning a gate or door." Terrified of getting the noun endings wrong, I'd stand and stammer, "Singular — porta, porta, portam, portae, portae, porta; plural — portae, portae, portas, portarum, portis, portis." He'd then choose another student to quiz, and I'd be hoping he wouldn't come back to me.

  Mr Payne was tall (6 feet 1 inch: 1.85 metres), lean and dark-haired with a receding hairline. He was age 33 the year he taught us. He had a reddish and badly scarred lower jaw, reputedly the result of being badly injured on active Army service during the war. (He had served as a lance-corporal in an anti-aircraft unit, as I've meanwhile learnt) Whether or not that had left him with emotional as well as physical scars, he certainly had an anger management problem. I'd be interested to know what his teaching colleagues thought about that. I'll never find out now because Geoff Lloyd, who was probably the last of them, died in 2005 at age 84.

- **Mr Mowson** (1896–1980) was our History teacher. He was in his mid-50s, had thinning, sandy-red hair and wore spectacles — the only teacher apart from Tommy Gronow and Mrs Bull (the Music teacher) who did. I don't remember much about him or his classes, apart from the curriculum focussing on the Stuart kings. He was reputedly a Communist. He made light of this on one occasion when he discussed rumours with us. "One rumour that I've heard," he said, "is that Mr Mowson is a Communist!" I've just learnt from an online search that he was born in South Africa, had served for two years in an Army garrison unit during the war, was married with three children, and that his given names were 'Alan Theodore William'.

- **Mrs McLeod** was our Art Teacher in both Forms 1 and 2. A motherly, expansive soul, she had a daughter who had been in our age cohort at Gardenvale for the primary school years, but had gone to St Michael's Anglican Girls' Grammar School in Windsor for her secondary schooling. Mrs McLeod got amazing results from our many artistically inclined girls. I couldn't believe how astoundingly good their painting was.

- **Mrs Bull** was a horn-rim bespectacled lady with a severe, short hair-do and a no-nonsense manner. Usually dressed in flared tweed skirts with broad, bold check pattern, she taught us Music in both 1950 and 1951. 'Taught' here is a misnomer because we didn't learn to read music, know musical theory, or play instruments. As in primary school, music sessions consisted of singing songs in unison. I can't remember any of the songs we sang, but I vaguely remember that we also sang rounds such as 'London's burning' and 'Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree'.

  As we were singing, Mrs Bull would walk up and down the aisles between the rows of desks, listening carefully to each of us in turn. In doing so, she'd been identifying those she wanted in her school choir. I was selected both years. I guess she thought my unbroken voice was sweet enough, and that I could sing in tune. The only songs I

remember singing in the choir are 'Tales from the Vienna woods' (music by Johann Strauss, words by Louis Lavater), and 'Drink to me only with thine eyes', the lyrics of which are the poem 'To Celia' by the poet Ben Jonson (1572–1637).

I'm surprised that Mrs Bull didn't have her choir singing in parts. Surely she could have taught us to sing in two-part harmony rather than always in unison? I suppose we sang sweetly and that our young faces shone angelically as we performed; but we probably would have sounded better if our youthful voices had been singing in harmony.

At this point I should mention that my musical education was continuing at home. For four years, 1949–1952, Grade 6 to Form 3, I was being taught piano by Miss Black, an itinerant teacher who visited our home for my weekly hour-long lessons. I began keenly, practised much, learnt to play all the major and minor scales, and could competently play the pieces she set for me to learn. I never progressed, however, because I lacked the co-ordination, sight-reading skill and all-round 'piano sense' required to master piano-playing. By the fourth year I'd lost interest after realising I'd never become a pianist. Eventually Miss Black suggested to Mum and Dad that they could spend their money better than on my lessons. I felt a mixed sense of relief and frustration — relieved I no longer had to spend half an hour daily practising, frustrated I'd spent so much time for little gain. By then I was playing tenor horn in the MHS brass band, which I greatly enjoyed. As I soon realised, the knowledge of musical theory imparted by Miss Black hadn't been entirely wasted.

Looking back on my Gardenvale teachers 72 years later, I realise that, with the exception of the elderly 'Butch' Townsend and Tommy Gronow, most were in their 30s and 40s. To me nowadays, that seems extraordinarily youthful. It's much younger than any of my three children and their spouses now are, all but one of whom are in their fifties. What that means is that most of the Gardenvale staff were still developing as teachers. As the case of Geoff Lloyd suggests, their careers had not yet peaked. Promotions and further responsibilities would have awaited them.

Melbourne High School

Having made the cut for Melbourne High School, I began there in Form 3 (Grade 9) at age 14 at the beginning of February in 1952. I was one of the few boys in that year's intake still wearing short pants, with grey knee-length stockings with bands in the school colours around the tops. Mercifully, Mum bought me my first suit with full-length trousers about mid-year0. The other boys were beginning to mock me for still wearing 'baby clothes'.

MHS claims ancient origins and maintains strong traditions. It had opened in 1854 as the 'National Model School', a combined primary school and teacher-training institution. In 1905 it was reorganised as the 'Continuation School', Victoria's first government secondary school with all grades from 9 to 12. Situated in Spring Street on the north-eastern edge of Melbourne's central business district, it admitted both boys and girls. The boys split away as MHS in 1927 and relocated to the present Forrest Hill site in South Yarra. The girls continued at Spring Street until they moved into new premises in Albert Park in 1934 and became MacRobertson Girls' High School or 'MacRob'. Since then, MHS and MacRob have regarded each other as brother and sister schools, and have shared various activities together, notably concerts, musical and drama productions, dances and debating contests.

MHS had a strict uniform code: grey suit, black leather shoes, school tie (maroon background, narrow black on green diagonal stripes), black cap with red and green braid around the rim, and a silver school badge above the peak at the front. The badge depicted a unicorn's head upon a crown, with the school motto, 'Honour the Work' on a scroll beneath.

MHS has been described as 'a private school within the public education system' because it vaunts its elitist scholastic tradition. It prides itself on its long and successful record of helping boys of modest background to succeed academically, enter university and eventually join the professions.

After being issued with our uniforms and books, which we obtained from the school store, we had to attend our first whole-of-school assembly. All 1,200 students, spread across Forms 3 to 6, spent the first hour on Monday in the school hall. We stood as the headmaster and prefects entered and took their places on the stage. We then sang the school song together. It goes to a jaunty tune in 6/8 time. It has these three verses and chorus, but the third verse is only ever sung for Anzac Day:

Blithesome our hearts are and free is our fancy
Swift fly the hours in work and in play;
Fain would we linger, but youth turns to manhood,
School days are passing, and we must away.

Chorus: Honour the work, let our motto remind us,
When courage weakens and stern grows the fight,
Strong, like its pillars, the School stands behind us,
Standing for duty, and standing for right.

Lo! Steering westward through life's stormy surges,
Those who once laboured and played here are gone;
Before them the vision, a lamp lit by learning,
A shrine to be guarded and fame to be won.

Red blood of youth calls from far distant Flanders,
Calls o'er the seas from Gallipoli's shore,
Loud rings the voice of the deathless departed,
"Honour the work that we honoured of yore."

All MHS Old Boys know the song and can still sing it no matter how many decades ago they were students at the school. Whenever my mate Tony Irvine and I got together, we'd sing it to entertain each other, our families and whoever else might be present. Occasionally when I'm out and about I'll meet chaps who say they attended MHS. I then ask them this question: "Is your heart still blithesome; and is your fancy free?" It never fails to bring them up with a jolt. They look at me quizzically for a moment then invariably ask, "When were you there?"

After we'd begun the weekly assemblies by singing 'Honour the Work', we listened to the headmaster's pep-talk, sat through a performance by the school orchestra or brass band or a solo by one of the school's pianists, and were addressed by a guest speaker. We then sang a final song from the school songbook, stood as the headmaster, prefects and guest filed out, and reluctantly dispersed to our classes.

I felt deeply fulfilled attending such a school, imbibing its lore and living out its task-oriented ethos of 'honouring the work'. The school left its indelible imprint upon me, as it did upon my father 28 years before me. Dad proudly remained, as I do, 'a Melbourne High boy'. For me, if not him, that's one of my most basic defining attributes. Thus, I'm a white Australian middle-class, Anglo-Celtic octogenarian, a Christian, a husband, father and grandfather, a one-time journalist and teacher, a historian and connoisseur of other historians' output — and a MHS Old Boy. Through most of the 67 years since I left the school I've remained a member of the Old Boys' Association; and for the past 42 years I've attended the

quinquennial reunions of the 'Class of 55', the cohort that left MHS in December 1955 at the end of Form 6.

Subjects studied

With one notable exception, the subjects I took at MHS in Forms 3 and 4 in 1952 and 1953 were the same as those I'd studied at Gardenvale Central in 1950 and 1951. The exception was German instead of Latin. Most of my Gardenvale 2A classmates continued with Latin, but I'd decided that a living language would ultimately be more useful than a dead one. I took German in all years till Form 6 and then for another year at the University of Melbourne. The reason for that was not so much my proficiency with the language but that a language other than English was a prerequisite for the Bachelor of Arts degree that I hoped to obtain eventually.

German was a good choice. As with Latin, I mastered its inflected grammar and was generally well above the class average at the end-of-term exams. By the time I'd finished studying German after first year university, I could read it reasonably well, make myself understood and even conduct a conversation. I can still do that over 60 years later; however, my difficulty is that the German I know is *Schuldeutsch*, 'school German', a formal, stilted version of the language, not the everyday colloquial conversational variety spoken by ordinary Germans and Austrians. Frustratingly, I never became a fluent speaker of German. For that to have happened, I would have had to spend three or four months in Germany wholly immersed in the culture and speaking only German. That was something my granddaughter Heidi Willis was able to do in 2018–19, when she attended a *Gymnasium* (high school) in Bavaria for a term. I envy Heidi that experience and the conversational fluency she acquired.

At MHS I also did well in English and History, usually scoring above the class averages. I loved both subjects and discovered I had an aptitude for each. In Form 6 English split into two subjects, 'Expression' and 'Literature', the first of these was compulsory and the second optional. Through the essays we regularly wrote for each subject, I realised I had a talent for stringing sentences together coherently and expressively. History also split, into both 'British' and 'Modern', each optional. I took both because I was beginning to understand that I had a special interest in the past and was acquiring an 'historical imagination'.

I wasn't much interested in Science, though I scored above the class averages in Forms 3 and 4; however, I opted to take Geology in Form 5, which I enjoyed greatly. My Maths classes at MHS confirmed what I already knew: I could never be a mathematician, no matter how hard I tried. For the first time ever, I began failing in the term exams, and was generally well below the class average. After I'd scored a 44 out of 100 in Maths B (Pure Maths) in first term in Form 4, compared to a class average of 58, I was reassigned to an Arithmetic class with the other low achievers. That meant I didn't get to study differential calculus like the Maths B class did. I continued to study Maths in Form 5, but it was Maths A, what secondary students nowadays call 'Veggie Maths' — simple mathematics for the students deemed incapable of proceeding into higher mathematics. What did I miss out on by never learning calculus? I'll never know because I have neither the time nor inclination to find out. (I've just googled it, and discover from *Wikipedia* that it's about rates of change, which is probably something historians should know about.)

Streaming

In 9th Grade at MHS, the class you were in depended on which language you were studying. Forms 3A, 3E and 3F took French, Form 3C took Latin, Forms 3B, 3D and 3H took German, and Form 3G did woodwork instead of a language. Because each of these classes had about 40 students, the 9th Grade cohort numbered some 320 students.

Only one class took Latin and one woodwork, but the three classes were taking French and three German. The French and German classes were streamed according to 'academic ability', a capacity determined by the 'entrance exam', a battery of IQ tests which the incoming cohort had taken at the end of 8th Grade. The highest scoring students went into 3A (French) and 3B (German), the next highest went into 3D (German) and 3E (French), and the lowest scoring went into 3F (French) and 3H (German). I was placed in Form 3D, which meant that among the 120 students learning German, I was deemed to be in the 'medium ability' group. At the end of Form 3 some shuffling up and down occurred according to exam results. For 10th Grade, three of the brightest 3D boys were moved up into 4B, several were dropped down into 4H, and some 3H boys were shifted up into 4D.

We might not have known that MHS was deliberately streaming us according to IQ. By moving students up and down between ability groups, the school was trying to maximise the outcomes for the brightest students, preparing the very best to become state Exhibition winners at the end of Form 6 — the top students in the various examinable subjects in Victoria's Matriculation Certificate exams. I now resent the fact that that was the school's practice. IQ tests measure a limited range of abilities, mainly logical reasoning and problem-solving skills. They can't estimate the breadth of the individual's general knowledge, the level of one's emotional and social intelligence, or artistic proclivities, ability to perceive beauty, capacity for thinking creatively and intuitively, or applying oneself diligently to tasks. Further, they present only a 'snapshot' of a student at a particular point in time, without accounting for subsequent intellectual, emotional and social development.

Through odd remarks they made, I now realise that some MHS teachers strongly supported streaming. They judged us accordingly, stereotypically, favouring the students in the top classes and expecting less from those in the lower classes. They've all been in their graves for decades now, but if I could have this conversation with them, I'd be arguing that the MHS students were already a highly select group and didn't need streaming. Further, by concentrating the brightest students in the two top classes, A and B, they were depriving the majority of students of contact with the smartest boys, and of the chance of learning from them. I'd also point out that many of the students in the lower classes, D, E, F and H, did well academically. They became doctors, lawyers, accountants, scientists, teachers, pharmacists, academics and business managers.

Tony Irvine and Lloyd Evans

Among the students moved up from 3H to 4D at the beginning of 1953 was Anthony Kyle Irvine (1937–2008), better known as Tony. The 4D form master, Lloyd Evans, who also taught us History, sat Tony and me next to each other at the middle of the very front row because we were his two 'problem boys'. Tony's problem was that he was a perennial latecomer. He lived in Yarra Street, Richmond, only several hundred metres from the school on the other side of the Chapel Street bridge across the Yarra River. Roll-call was at 8.30 a.m., so Tony left his short walk to school till the very last minute. He often arrived just as Mr Evans was marking the roll. This habit earned him the nickname 'Sleepy' because we reckoned he was only waking up as we were walking from the train station or tram stop to the school. By contrast, I'd catch the 7.56 a.m. train from North Brighton, which arrived at South

Yarra at 8.16, leaving me a comfortable 10 minutes to walk to the school, stow my gear in my locker, and be waiting in the 4D home room when Mr Evans entered the room at 8.29 for roll call.

My problem was talkativeness. I continually chattered to the boys in the desks around mine, enjoying the experience of reaching out to others and making new friends. They were a variegated group. They came from most of the Central Schools that sent students to MHS. Several were repeating the year, after having failed the third term exams in Form 4 the year before. A couple were recent immigrants, one English the other German. About a dozen were Jewish; two were Catholics; and most of the rest of us were at least nominal adherents of the various Protestant denominations. Inquisitive about their backgrounds, I satisfied my curiosity by chatting with them in class. This greatly irritated Mr Evans, who, though he became a historian himself, might not have appreciated that talking with and asking questions of diverse people are essential skills to be acquired by historians-in-the-making. Neither he nor I could know at that stage that I'd one day be an historian and was already learning my 'trade skills'. In my report book he wrote that I was 'inclined to be talkative' and that my conduct was 'not always satisfactory'.

Tony and I became mates through having been sat together by Mr Evans. Our friendship continued until Tony's death 14 years ago. In that time we became as close to each other as brothers. He holidayed with us in Creswick, and my parents and siblings came to regard him as an additional son of the Willis family. When we married, we were each other's Best Man. When we had sons, we named them after each other; and so there's now a Tony Willis and an Ian Irvine. Though Mr Evans never knew it, we joked about how grateful we were that he'd brought us together.

As for Lloyd William Evans M.A. Dip.Ed. (1919–2004), like many other MHS teachers he was himself an Old Boy of the school. He was a dapper, handsome chap of medium height (5 foot 8 inches tall: 1.73 metres), of slim build, dark, with well-brushed hair, a neat moustache, and horn-rimmed glasses. He'd served for four years with the Navy as a pay-master during World War II, reaching the rank of lieutenant (analogous to an Army captain). Lloyd also had a glorious tenor voice, and sometimes sang to us at school assemblies. He'd received operatic training and moonlighted as an opera soloist in Melbourne.

Lloyd later lectured at the Secondary Teachers' College at Melbourne University, where he became the head of the history department, roughly the equivalent of a professor. He also chaired the state Matriculation examination board in Australian History. He published four books. A couple were either school textbooks or oriented towards the teaching of History; the others were conventional narrative histories. I have one of his books, *Contemporary Sources and Opinions in Modern British History* (1967), given to me by his son Michael about 13 years ago. It's a carefully researched tome that he wrote with a co-author.

If Lloyd Evans had remembered me, he might have been surprised to know that I became an historian. (I hope he'd had been impressed that my own tally of books now exceeds his by a factor of six.) He only ever gave me marks at or near the class average in History in Form 4. I nevertheless enjoyed his classes, which that year dealt with Australian History — the only time in my life I've ever studied the subject formally. He was an excellent teacher who enthused his students. Having learnt much in his classes, I opted to take both British and Modern History in Form 5 in 1954.

Certificates

In each of my four years at MHS I qualified for a certificate by passing the end-of-year exams. The Proficiency Certificate came at the end of Form 3, the Intermediate Certificate

after Form 4, the Leaving Certificate after Form 5 and, last of all, the Matriculation Certificate following Form 6. There was even a Merit Certificate for those who had passed in Form 2.

Except for the 'Matric', all of these were awarded by the Victorian Education Department; but I've never seen any of them. They were relics of an earlier era when fewer students completed all six years of secondary education. The department was still issuing the certificates in the mid-1940s, but I guess as more and more students continued until Grade 12, the certificates for the lower Grades became passée. Perhaps the Leaving Certificate was still being issued in the 1950s because it was the qualification required for entry into primary teachers' colleges.

The department didn't award the 'Matric' because that was issued by the University of Melbourne, at that time the only university in Victoria. I did receive a copy of the certificate, which the university probably sent to me. It shows that I passed in each of English Expression, English Literature and German, and received second-class honours in both British and Modern History.

Sport

Sport was an important part of the MHS program. In Forms 3 and 4, all students spent a double-period each week — about 1½ hours — in Physical Education classes. In PE we were taught basic gymnastics and the elementary skills required for cricket, football, basketball and athletics. Each year, those of us who thought we were good enough took part in the annual House swimming and athletics carnivals. The whole school participated in an annual three-mile (4.8-kilometre) cross-country run, and we spent a half-afternoon a week in team competitions, playing for either a House or the school.

The cross-country run was something new for me. Through competing in it, I discovered that despite suffering exercise-induced asthma, I was comparatively good at long-distance running. In my 30s I took to distance running in a big way and ran a dozen marathons. By then the Ventolin puffer had reduced the risk of asthma to zero; and so I was able to revel in the joy of running long distances. Running gave me a sense of freedom and self-confidence that nothing else did. In my time as a runner, perhaps 40 years, I must have run many tens of thousands of kilometres. Eventually ankle injuries forced me to give it up; and after that I began swimming a couple of kilometres daily to keep fit.

As well as the cross-country, there were annual inter-high school swimming and athletics carnivals. I was in the school swimming team as a breast-stroker in a couple of years, perhaps during Forms 4 and 6. In addition, we competed in 'invitation' swimming competitions against Scotch and Wesley Colleges, in their swimming pools. (MHS now has its own pool, but it wasn't built until years after I'd left the school.) In my last year we participated in a 'field day' at Melbourne Grammar School, where I played in one of the hockey teams. And every year MHS competed against Adelaide High School in a sporting carnival, with each school visiting the other in alternate years.

I changed my sports each year I was at MHS. In Form 3, I played cricket in first and third terms, and football in second term. In Form 4 I took 'YMCA' — gymnastics and swimming at the YMCA headquarters building on the site of what's now the National Gallery of Victoria. In Form 5 I switched to rowing and rowed in both 'fours' and 'eights', thus acquiring useful boat-handling skills. Unfortunately, we didn't get to row in sculls — in which each rower pulls on a pair of oars, not just one. (I rather envy my granddaughter Heidi, who rowed in a 'quad-four', i.e. a scull with four rowers.) In Form 6 I took up hockey, and played in the MHS second team. I also played in the MHS Old Boys' Association under-18 team on Saturdays. I then continued playing in Old Boys' hockey teams during my time at

teachers' college and university. I only stopped playing when posted to the Warrambeen school in 1962. I took up hockey again years later after we'd settled in Canberra. I played my last game in 1994, indoor hockey in a work team. We were beaten 9–0 by a women's team which turned out to comprise members of the Hockeyroos, the national Australian women's side, who were in Canberra at the time. I didn't feel quite so bad about being thrashed 9–0 after I learned who our opponents were.

Houses

Internal competitions at MHS, sporting, choral, drama and debating, were organised on a House basis. All incoming students were assigned to one of four Houses: Como, Forrest, Waterloo and Yarra, which took their names from local geographic features. Like all the incoming boys in Forms 3D and 3H in 1952, I joined Waterloo, which was named after a house that had once stood on the MHS site. I represented Waterloo in my age-grade at the annual swimming carnival each year. I usually finishing second in the 50-metre breaststroke behind David Peters of Forrest, who'd been at Gardenvale with me in Forms 1A and 2A. David enjoyed an advantage: outside school he was a member of a swimming club and was privately coached. So, too, was Tony Irvine, who swam for the Richmond club and always won the 50-metre backstroke event at school.

I was never a debater or a drama enthusiast, but I sang with the rest of Waterloo House in the annual choral competition in the Melbourne Town Hall. One of the Form 6 boys with musical talent always conducted the House choir. I can't remember the names of any of them, but one year Waterloo was the winner. I also sang in the school choir intermittently.

Clubs — Cadets and the brass band

The last two periods on Friday afternoon were given over to club activities; and every boy had to join a club. The clubs were many and varied. In my time at MHS I could have joined the Esperanto, Braille, Loom-Weaving, Chess, Literary Discussion, United Nations, Art, History, Drama, Mathematics and Model Aero Clubs.

I joined the biggest club of all: the Army Cadet Corps, to which about a third of all the students belonged. I joined the Cadets at the beginning of Form 3, an act that horrified my pacifist parents, especially when I brought my rifle home for the first time.

In the second term, however, I quit my platoon to join the Cadet brass band; and instead of a .303 rifle slung over my shoulder, I carried an E-flat tenor horn in a case. My parents preferred the cacophony of my horn practice at home to the sight of me cleaning my .303. After a year on tenor horn, I switched to the B-flat baritone horn. The band master, Bob Dunne, a professional band conductor, who conducted various brass bands, thought my playing style was better suited to the baritone rather than the tenor horn.

Although we were the Cadet band, we had a life of our own apart from the other Cadet units. For example, we participated in the annual state brass band championships, winning the D-Grade title in 1953 and the C-Grade title in 1955. We also made guest appearances at various venues to entertain the public. We practised during the Friday afternoon club sessions and on Monday afternoons after school. Getting on and off the trains on band practice days was always a hassle, particularly if the train was crowded. With my heavily laden bag of books in one hand and my bulky baritone horn case in the other, I took up more than my fair share of space.

As a bandsman, I was in the Cadets for all the years I was at MHS. In all that time I remained a private. I was one of the few Cadets in Form 6 who'd never been promoted, not even to lance-corporal. There were various reasons for that, I guess. First, I was never

embarrassed by my lack of seniority. I wasn't ambitious and I knew that leadership wasn't my forté. While I've always been a good team member, I've never been much interested in advancement and being in charge. Second, I was only a mediocre horn player. I could play all the parts for first baritone horn competently enough after I'd rote-learned the parts, but I lacked the spark of virtuosity that the better bandsmen possessed. Bryan Dowling, who played E-flat soprano cornet and was therefore given solo parts, stated it well when deriding my lack of talent one day. "Willis, you're not much use to the band!" he remarked; "for example, you couldn't play a cadenza!" How could I object to the put-down? He was telling the simple truth. (Bryan, who died several years ago, went on to a highly successful career as one of Canberra's leading architects. One of his masterpieces was Rydges, a five-star hotel, on Canberra Avenue near parliament house.)

I quit baritone horn playing on leaving MHS. To have continued would have meant buying my own instrument, which I couldn't afford. I'd also have had to find a band to play in that had a vacancy for a horn player of modest accomplishment. At various points in the intervening decades I've picked up baritone horns, when some band player has allowed me to, and have immediately been able to play them.

Prefects

MHS had well-developed student leadership structures. Every class in every form had a Form Captain and a Vice-Captain. Every House had a House Captain, always a Form 6 student. There was also a Student Representative Council, but it had little effective power and confined itself to fundraising for charity. In overall command were the School Prefects, about 18 of them. So we could tell who they were at a glance, they wore a distinctive lapel badge — the unicorn emblem in gilt within a scarlet roundel. (The rest of us had to be content with a silver unicorn and no roundel.) They also wore a cloth version of the same badge on the breast pocket of their blazers.

The Prefects, who were always Form 6 students, wielded considerable authority. For instance, periodically they would place themselves on duty at South Yarra station to catch students not wearing their school caps correctly. The penalty was an afternoon or two of detention, staying back for an hour after school had finished to write 'lines', e.g. writing out *'I must always wear my cap correctly when travelling to and from school'* 200 times.

I was pinged once in Form 3 by John Roland Howes (1935–),[1] a leader of the MHS chapter of the Student Christian Movement and a first-rate athlete who specialised in the mile. He was waiting at the exit gate to catch the capless and those who were not wearing their caps in the approved manner — at a jaunty angle, for instance. He wrote my name and form number in his 'dob' book and instructed me to be in the detention room at 4.00 p.m. sharp. If I'd been bold enough, I'd have given him a false name and form; but, being a truthful Sunday School boy and in awe of the Prefects at that stage, I had no option but to accept my punishment.

Half the Prefects were selected by the staff at the end of Form 5. The criteria were perceived leadership qualities, dignity, academic attainments, and a sense of responsibility. The other half were elected by the Form 6 students at the beginning of Form 6. The elected group tended to be the popular sportsmen. The Prefects then elected their own leader, who became the School Captain.

[1] After MHS, John Howes graduated in Arts at Melbourne University and became Victoria's Rhodes Scholar in 1957. At Oxford he studied 'Greats' (i.e. classical Greek and Latin) then turned to Philosophy. He eventually held the Chair in Philosophy at the University of Capetown. After returning to Australia he established his own adult education agency, Learningguild.

In 1955 we former Gardenvale Central boys were elated when John Douglas Taylor (1938–), a classmate of mine from Forms 1A and 2A, became the School Captain. John was a born leader. He'd been elected Form Captain in both 1A and 2A and was the Gardenvale School Captain in 1951. As mentioned, John had a distinguished career as a urologist. Although we've never been intimate friends, I've kept in touch with him. He graciously volunteered to become a member of the panel of advisers who critically review the chapters of my military-medical histories as I draft them. In return for that great favour, I nominated him for an Order of Australia award five years ago. A year later, 2018, he received the 'AM' (Member of the Order of Australia) in the Queen's Birthday honours list. I was disappointed he wasn't granted a higher award because I'm sure he merited that, but I was nevertheless greatly satisfied that his many contributions to the advancement of medicine in Australia, Papua New Guinea, the UK, Africa and South-East Asia had been officially recognised at last. I was surprised he hadn't been honoured many years earlier because he certainly deserved to be.

By the time I was in Form 6, I was less in awe of the Prefects than in my junior years. By then, most of them were chaps with whom I'd rubbed shoulders in the home room, in class, on the sports field or in the Cadet band. I didn't think they all deserved the honour; and I couldn't see what purpose they served other than helping the staff maintain student discipline. The one Prefect with whom I had a contretemps during Form 6 was John Hart. Previously I'd rather liked John even though I'd had little to do with him. I can't remember what caused our run-in, but it boiled down to his being overbearing. He'd peremptorily ordered me to do something I regarded as unreasonable. When I refused, he said he'd report me. "Report away!" I replied, confident the matter was so trivial I wouldn't be punished even if he'd complained about me to the Deputy Principal, the staff member responsible for discipline.

John, who was very popular with his fellow Prefects, died eight years ago at age 77. He'd had a distinguished career as an orthopaedic surgeon. For many years he was the head of the Orthopaedic Department at the Alfred Hospital, one of Australia's oldest and most prestigious teaching hospitals. As such, he was also an Associate Professor at Monash University. He was prominent in the Old Boys' Association, and regularly attended the quinquennial reunions of the 'Class of 1955', all of which I've attended. Whenever we met at the reunions, we'd simply acknowledge each other by nodding. Decades after the event we were still wary of each other, remembering how I'd defied him in 1955.

Perhaps I should allude here to 'forgiving and forgetting'. As far as I was concerned, there was nothing to forgive. John hadn't offended me by being bossy, and I didn't hold our disagreement against him. Forgetting? Being who and what I am, it's just one incident among a myriad that I happen to recall from my school days long ago; and I place no significance on the fact that I've remembered it.

George Langley and Bill Woodfull

The two most impressive school principals I've ever encountered were George Furner Langley (1891–1971) and William ('Bill') Maldon Woodfull (1897–1965). Both were MHS Old Boys, and both had distinguished careers as teachers and as the headmasters of various other high schools before becoming the MHS Principal.

George (as we called him) was the MHS Principal through all my time at MHS. A Gallipoli veteran who'd been promoted through the ranks to captain, he'd then served as a major and lieutenant-colonel commanding units of the Imperial Camel Corps and the Australian Light Horse during the desert campaigns in Sinai, Palestine and Syria 1916–1918.

During World War II he'd enlisted again and was promoted to brigadier. The press usually referred to him as Brigadier Langley. That gave rise to his MHS nickname, 'the Brig'.

Bill (as he was known) had been the Australian cricket captain during the early 1930s, including the notorious 1932–1933 'bodyline' Test series against England. He was Deputy Principal at MHS during my first two years at the school. He then spent the next two years as Principal of Box Hill Boys' High School before returning to MHS as the Principal when George Langley retired in 1956. Bill spent six years in the job before his own retirement.

I won't expatiate here upon my recollections of George and Bill, because each has a comprehensive online biographical profile in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and also in *Wikipedia*. Further, my distinguished MHS contemporary and friend, Dr Alan Gregory, the school historian and a leading educationist at Monash University, has published excellent biographies of both men. These are *A sentimental soldier: A life of George Furner Langley* (2008) and *Woodfull, Gentleman and Scholar: A life of William Maldon Woodfull* (2011). Alan Gregory is also the author of the MHS official centenary history — *Strong Like Its Pillars: Melbourne High School 1905–2005, Victoria's First State Secondary School*. I've relied heavily on this book in writing this chapter. It's the best institutional history I've ever read. I felt greatly privileged to attend its launch in the MHS assembly hall on 15 February 2005. My copy is one that Alan personally inscribed for me then.

I'll restrict myself to two anecdotes about George Langley and one about Bill Woodfull. George read every boy's term report, and added comments of his own to praise, encourage and admonish. In the first of the 12 term reports I received at MHS, when my Form 3D teacher had observed that I needed to do extra work in Maths, George wrote, *'Tackle difficulties & become certain about methods in Maths & your report should be much better.'* In first term in Form 4D, when Lloyd Evans had written that my indifferent results reflected inconsistent work, George added, *'This report calls for improvement in Term 2'.* In first term in Form $5D_2$, when I achieved excellent results, he wrote, *'Compare your start this year with that of 1953 & you will understand that this is reason for pleasure.'* And his very final report in third term in Form $6B_1$ said that *'I hope revision has brought you up to honours list in all subjects'*.

Perhaps George knew my name from writing such reports; however, he wouldn't have known who I was and couldn't have picked me out in a class. Despite that, I've always been greatly impressed that he took the time and effort to write such notes in the report books of all 1,200 MHS students three times a year. It was a huge labour of love; and I'm sure it made a difference to every one of us, or at least to those of us who took his comments to heart.

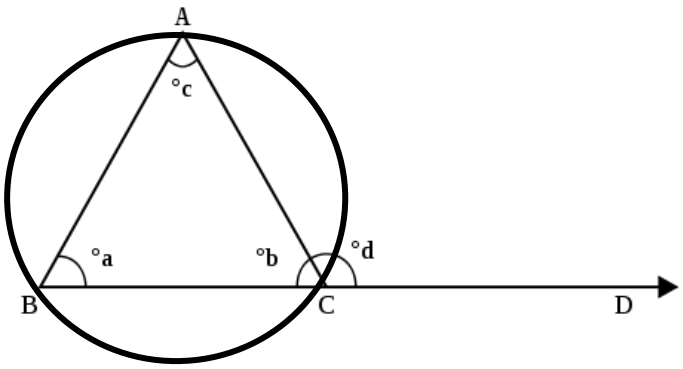
One friend of mine whom George did know was Tony Irvine. Whenever he'd see Tony in the school corridors, he'd stop him to ask how he was faring. That was because Tony was a 'Legatee', i.e. a boy whose father had died on military service during the war. The Legatees were supported by Legacy, an organisation formed after World War I to help the families of the fallen. An old soldier who'd lost many friends during the two World Wars, George took particular interest in the progress of the Legatees.

My anecdote about Bill Woodfull was one told to us in Form 3D by our Maths Teacher, Wilbur Courtis, another MHS Old Boy. Wilbur had a much closer relationship with me than with other students. That was because he had attended the Male Street Methodist Church, where he had been the Sunday School Superintendent and had been my Sunday School teacher. I knew his parents and three sisters, who were all regular attenders at the Sunday services; and he and Dad, both of them Methodist local (i.e. lay) preachers, were good friends.

The story Wilbur told us was about the time that Bill Woodfull had been his Maths teacher back in the early 1930s. On one occasion Bill had scored a much-publicised duck in an important cricket match. The next day at MHS, one of the boys in Wilbur's class had

drawn a large round 'O' on the blackboard to indicate Bill's score. The class then sat back to await Bill's arrival and see how he reacted to the conspicuous 'zero' on the board.

Bill, who was famously dour, entered the room, glanced at the 'O', and without cracking a smile reached for the blackboard ruler and chalk. He then drew a triangle within the circle, extended one of the sides, and then labelled the points of the triangle and line A, B, C and D, and each of the resulting angles 'a', 'b', 'c' and 'd'. He drew this figure:



Without missing a beat, he then instructed the class to open their exercise books and there prove the 'exterior angle theorem', namely that the exterior angle ACD (d) equals the sum of the two opposite interior angles, ABC (a) and BAC (c). Dour certainly, but admirably quick-witted.

The final point I'll make about George Langley and Bill Woodfull is that, like me, both were lifelong Methodists. I've now lived four years longer than George did, and 16 years longer than Bill, who died comparatively young. I'm reminded here of a saying of the late Norma Crouch, who attended Tuggeranong Uniting Church with me for many years. Norma, who knew of my Methodist origins and had grown up Methodist herself, used to quote an old rhyme to express our shared sense of identity:

I'm Methody born and Methody bred,
And when I'm gone that's a Methody *dead!*

Teachers

In my four years at MHS I had dozens of teachers. While I remember most of them, I'll limit this discussion to four who taught me in Form 6 and influenced the direction my life has taken: Jack Baker, Col Williamson, Ben Munday and Arthur Cocks.

- **John ('Jack') Gillies Baker** (born 1916), universally known as 'Doughie' by MHS students, taught me English in Form 4 and English Expression in Form 6. He was a charismatic teacher who, except for war service with the RAAF, had been teaching for 19 years when he taught me for the first time. He had attended Benalla High School, where he was Dux in 1933. He'd trained at the Melbourne Teachers' College and taught in one-teacher bush schools before transferring to Northcote High School. While there, he completed the first year of a B.A. course at Melbourne University.

  At age 24 in 1940 Jack had enlisted in the RAAF, hoping to be selected for air crew; instead he was trained as an electrical maintenance technician. Assigned to a series of squadrons, he serviced aircraft at numerous RAAF bases in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and New Guinea. In 1943 he spent six months in the US undergoing a series of technical training courses. During his 5½ years' RAAF service, he'd been promoted up through the ranks and had ended the war as a flight-lieutenant (equivalent to an Army captain).

At MHS Jack was best known for his involvement in the Cadet Corps. In my last two years at the school he commanded the Corps with the rank of major. I've been greatly surprised in researching his life to learn that before becoming a Cadet officer he'd had no Army experience at all.

What Jack lacked in Army experience, he made up for with zeal. One of his habits during Cadet parades was to move around the fringes collaring non-Cadet onlookers who were making fun of the military spectacle unfolding on the school oval. He'd put them on his own form of 'detention', which was to report to him wherever he was in the school at the beginning of each period. As I discovered from experience in Form 4, this was highly inconvenient and embarrassing. I might finish a class at one end of the school and would then have to dash off to the other end for him to tick me off in his detention book. I'd then rush back to my class in time for the next lesson. Invariably I'd be late and would have to make excuses to an irritable teacher whose lesson I'd interrupted. Fortunately, Doughie only kept me on detention for two or three days. These days he'd never get away with such antics. Neither the students nor his fellow teachers would accept it.

Apart from that exercise in being disciplined, I appreciated being in Doughie's English classes. He was a short, stocky chap with a mop of curly hair. His teaching style was relaxed and informal. He taught 'conversationally', raising topics then chatting with us and asking questions about them. As that stage I was an insecure lad, so I was always grateful when he boosted my confidence by commenting favourably on my writing ability or by complimenting me on an answer I'd given.

After about 11 years at MHS, in 1959 Jack Baker moved to the Secondary Teachers' College at Melbourne University as head of the English Department. He later worked at the Government representative on the Victorian Teachers' Tribunal, the agency that set salaries and conditions of service for teachers in government schools. (As such, he had much to do with my brother-in-law, Jack Churchyard, who was the tribunal research officer.)

- **Colin George Williamson** (1914–1960), nicknamed 'Boozie', taught me Modern History in Form 6. He was another charismatic teacher, and with Ben Munday, who taught me British History, awakened my sense of vocation.

  The name 'Modern' History was a misnomer because the course dealt with the European Renaissance and Reformation of the 15th and 16th centuries. Whatever it was called, as Mr Williamson taught the subject, it engaged my interest deeply. For the first time I thought I had come to know a period in history well. And for the first time I worked hard in History, striving to be one of the best students in the class. Mr Williamson helped by setting a series of optional essay topics. I diligently wrote as many essays as I could, and he gave them all good marks — generally 'A-' and occasionally 'A', but never the coveted 'A+'. He only ever gave 'A+' to the two top students, David Johanson and Mark Richmond, each of whom won Exhibitions in the Matric exams at the end of the year. David won the Modern History Exhibition and a General Exhibition for all-round excellence, and Mark won a General Exhibition. Both their names were duly inscribed on the Exhibitions Honour Roll in the School Memorial Hall. My efforts in the final Matric exam earned me an 'Hon2', second class honours, which delighted me.

  Both 'Joey' and Mark went up to Melbourne University with me the next year. They took the History Honours course, which was separate from the one we ordinary pass-

degree students did; and both graduated with first class honours. Unfortunately, their History careers didn't prosper. Personal and family problems overwhelmed them. David lectured in History at Latrobe University, but his private life unravelled and he died an alcoholic at about age 50. Mark completed a protracted PhD in History at ANU 17 years before I did but suffered severe depression. He was eventually given a grace-and-favour job as the archivist of Melbourne University, which he did with great expertise until his retirement. He died two years ago at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. I watched his online funeral via 'Zoom'.

I'm much saddened that neither 'Joey' nor Mark fulfilled their early promise. If their personal circumstances had been otherwise, they could have held Chairs of History in prestigious overseas universities because they had oceans of talent. Each wrote a book, but these are probably forgotten now. Through their experience I've realised that becoming a successful practising historian takes more than academic brilliance. Just as important as intellectual capacity are diligence, perseverance, ability to meet deadlines faithfully, willingness to master and apply historiographical skills, and determination to succeed in one's chosen craft.

After that historiographical digression, I now return to Col Williamson, about whom I know very little. Before he taught me in Form 6, I only knew him as the teacher in charge of the school shop, which I'd visit occasionally when it was open during lunch to buy a new exercise book or a new school tie when the old one had frayed.

Mr Williamson was reputedly a member of the Anglican Synod in Melbourne; and I remember him arguing points of religion with a couple of class members, Ian Burnside (a Catholic) and Ian Gordon (a Methodist). I was therefore surprised to discover from his Army service record that he was a Presbyterian. He spent four years in the Army during the war and was promoted to Warrant Officer II, but he served in clerical positions at Army headquarters in Melbourne and never saw active service overseas. His online Army service record tells me that he was born in Colac and was already a teacher when he enlisted at age 26 in 1941.

Col Williamson was a tallish (5 foot 11 inches: 1.8 metres), well-built, good-looking chap, and he had an air of authority. He died young in 1960 at age 46. I remember that Bob Carey, who'd been in Forms 3D and 4D with me, and was in my Modern History class in Form 6, told me that when he was in 5th year Medicine, 'Boozie' had been one of the patients he examined during a training session at his teaching hospital. Bob, who's of Lebanese ancestry, later became an orthopaedic surgeon, and is one of the school pals I enjoy catching up with at school reunions. Sadly, Mr Williamson was dying from cancer.

As for Mr Williamson's nickname, until recently I had no idea how he got stuck with 'Boozie'. He seemed a sober, serious chap and I'm sure he wasn't an alcoholic. My old Gardenvale and MHS mate, 'Gentleman Jim' Mathieson, has now provided the answer. Jim knew Col Williamson independently of MHS because they lived near each other in South Caulfield. Col had a prominent nose that was susceptible to allergies. Even drinking a cup tea could make it flare red. People thought he must have been surreptitiously tippling behind the shelves in the school shop. It was the allergy-inflamed nose rather than covert drinking, however, that led to the nickname.

- **Benjamin ('Ben') Joseph Munday** (1925–1975), universally known as Ben, grew up in a farming family at Cohuna in the mid-Murray Valley in northern Victoria. An Old

Boy of the school, he taught me British History in Form 6. By doing so, he helped me realise that thinking and writing about History was what I did best.

Ben was one of MHS's high-profile, larger-than-life characters. Apart from being the Matric British History specialist, he coached the first XVIII football team. He was also a Cadet officer, and as Major Munday took command of the Corps in 1964. Like Jack Baker earlier, he was an ex-serviceman but not one with an Army background. He'd joined the Navy as an ordinary Seaman at age 18 in January 1943 after exiting MHS the previous month. Trained as a radar operator, he was promoted to Able Seaman (equivalent of an Army lance-corporal) and served on various ships until his discharge after the end of the war.

Ben returned to MHS as a teacher in 1953. He spent the rest of his life there, 22 years. He dropped dead from a heart attack in the school foyer at age 49 several weeks before the end of the 1974 school year.

Ben taught me the very first year he took the Matric British History class. Only a dozen of us took the subject that year, so we received much individual attention. Short (5 foot 5 inches: 1.65 metres) and rotund, he had a down-to-earth, no-nonsense manner that appealed to us. Keen for us to succeed in the Matric exams, he knew that his reputation as a senior History teacher would depend on our success. And so he spoon-fed us. Whereas Col Williamson had us writing essays independently, Ben taught by going over model answers to questions that were likely to be on the final exam paper. The course was on 18th century social history in Britain — mainly the consequences of the industrial and agricultural revolutions. The class notes that Ben handed out were first rate, and I loved hearing him expound upon them. They consisted of the cyclostyled answers to the questions that he regarded as most likely to gain us the best marks. He would have been happy with our results. Mark Richmond scored an 'Hons1', several of us got 'Hons2', the rest passed, and no one failed.

The 'Hons2' I received in Ben's subject, gratified me enormously. I paid the price for his teaching method the next year at university, however. Not having learnt to work independently, I failed British History. Instead of being in a cosseted class of 12, I sat in a vast lecture theatre with 500 other students. The lecturer was the formidable Associate Professor Kathleen Fitzpatrick, with whom I never spoke and only ever saw at a distance. Most of her lectures went over my head. The real teaching was done in the weekly tutorials conducted by junior tutors, who were mostly M.A. students, new to teaching and not yet very confident or effective.

Ben Munday was partly responsible for my becoming a teacher. Students who, like me, were from lower middle-class families and destined for B.A. degrees in the Humanities, had few options but teaching. To pay our university fees we needed financial support that our parents couldn't provide. The Commonwealth Scholarship scheme covered fees but included no living allowance. An Education Department bursary, however, bestowed both. The catch was that the bursary recipients were bonded to the department for three years' teaching at the end of the course. Further, the bursaries were available only for teaching subjects — majors in English, History, Geography, Latin, French, German, Maths, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology etc — not in, say, Law, Medicine, Engineering and Architecture. Several times Ben discussed career options with us. I remember him saying, "If you go into teaching, you won't make much money, but you'll have a lot of fun and you'll do much good!"

I greatly admired my Form 6 teachers, who were some of the best in Victoria, and so I decided to apply for a bursary and become a high school teacher myself, specialising in History and English.

- **Arthur Noel Cocks** (1921–2007) was my home-room teacher in Form $5D_2$ in 1954 and again in Form $6B_1$ in 1955. (I don't know why MHS had such an arcane class numbering system in Grades 11 and 12. It was never explained to us and I could never work it out.) Arthur, who had no nickname other than occasionally 'Cocksie', also taught me English in Form 5 and English Literature in Form 6. I consequently saw much of him in my last two years of school; and he more than any other teacher influenced the course my life subsequently took.

  Like the other three teachers described above, Arthur was an ex-serviceman. An MHS Old Boy, he joined the Army at 19 in July 1940 and spent the next 6½ years in uniform. His entire Army career was within the Signals Corps in various locations, including Melbourne, Perth, Hobart, Sydney and Morotai (now in Indonesia). He was promoted fairly swiftly to sergeant and then lieutenant but didn't advance further than that. Why he didn't climb further up the promotional ranks is a puzzle, because he received excellent assessments on the training courses he attended. Perhaps it had something to do with his having been an insurance clerk not an engineer. On Morotai he served as an adjutant, i.e. the administrator for the commanding officer of a unit. He was the Signals adjutant at Army HQ on Morotai, which was the forward base from which the Borneo campaigns (Labuan, Balikpapan & Tarakan) were mounted. To be appointed adjutant, he must have impressed his superiors as being diligent, methodical, efficient and reliable. After returning to Australia, in May 1946, he became an instructor at the Signals training unit in Sydney.

  Arthur was an inspirational teacher, by far the best teacher of English I've ever known. He loved his subject and his students. For him, the very greatest achievement of his life was to shepherd successive cohorts of MHS Form 6 students through the hazards of the external Matric exams in English Expression and English Literature, and to take pride in the proportion who passed and, better still, gained honours.

  Arthur's specialty was Shakespeare and the Romantic and Victorian poets. The only Shakespearian plays I remember us studying were *Hamlet* (in both Forms 5 and 6), *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Richard II*. Although I think Shakespeare was the most brilliant writer who has ever lived, I find his plays too difficult to read for pleasure. Watching them performed is also difficult because I miss so many of his pithy, profound insights. Arthur did his best to help us appreciate Shakespeare's greatness by reading the great soliloquies to us with such emotion he'd be on the verge of tears by the time he was done. He took us on excursions to see *Hamlet* performed (I recall) in the hall of St Peter's Church in East Melbourne and a film version of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the South Yarra cinema.

  Arthur came to MHS in 1953 after a stint of teaching at Elwood Central School. He taught at the school for the next ten years, until 1962, when his friend Jack Baker lured him to the Secondary Teachers' College. He continued there until the early 1980s, but he probably wished he'd remained at MHS, where he'd been extraordinarily happy.

  Arthur never married but continued living at home with his mother, a World War I war-bride from England. She'd married Arthur's father, who'd brought her back to Australia. On a trip to Canberra with her in 1981, Arthur brought her to meet

Margaret and me over dinner. Mrs Cocks seemed pleased to know that I was aware of what a war-bride was. She signed our visitors' book as 'Florrie Cocks' and wrote 'war-bride' after her signature. Arthur was the oldest of her five children, and he took responsibility for supporting his Mum and siblings after his father's death. His father was Robert Cocks (1880–1947), a clerk who'd served overseas for five years in the Pay Corps during World War I; he'd been promoted through the ranks to captain and awarded the MBE.

Like Lloyd Evans, Arthur was among MHS's most dapper teachers. Of medium height (5 foot 8 inches: 1.73 metres) and slim build, with well-groomed dark hair, he was immaculate in his tweed suits and well-polished brogues. He lived till 87. Sadly, he spent his last few years in a nursing home after suffering a series of debilitating strokes.

I used to meet Arthur every five years at the MHS reunions; and he always sought me out because I'd supported him at our very first, our 25th anniversary reunion in 1980. On that occasion, one of our cohort, Terry ('Butch') Osborne, an alcoholic who was already staggering drunk and was trying to be funny, rolled up to the table where Arthur and I were chatting. "Arthur Cocks," he bawled, "you were the very worst teacher I ever had!" It was the cruellest thing anyone could ever have said to Arthur. One of the chaps at the table, the burly Stuart ('Slim') Mackie, one of my Gardenvale chums, who'd been a wrestler, removed Butch, while the others at the table apologised for Butch and assured Arthur that he'd been the very best teacher who'd ever taught any of us. As soon as I got home to Canberra I wrote to him to say that his example was what had persuaded me to enter teaching, and that, for me as a senior teacher in one of Canberra's Year 11–12 colleges, he remained my 'gold standard' for pedagogical excellence. It was to thank me for saying so that he brought his mother to meet us.

Arthur encouraged me by giving me good marks and positive end-of-term reports. *'An earnest worker; very good results'* and *'has worked conscientiously throughout the year'* were typical. Such positive feedback heartened me, so I kept trying harder.

Thinking about my MHS teachers now, I realise how fortunate I was to have been taught by so many practised masters of the pedagogical arts. Would I have done as well in secondary school if I'd gone to, say, Brighton Tech or Hampton High School? Perhaps I might still have gone on to university but having been through MHS I was almost assured of entry into tertiary education.

MHS chums

MHS was 'multicultural' before that term had ever been coined. For years before I went there in 1952, the school had been receiving large numbers of Jewish students. In my time, about a third of the student population was Jewish, which meant that MHS was probably the biggest Jewish school in Australia. The Jewish boys were probably from most of the nations of Europe. The luckier ones were from families who'd escaped the looming holocaust during the 1930s. Others had somehow survived the Nazi conflagration and had then migrated to Australia as 'DPs' — 'displaced persons' — in the immediate post-war years. They tended to keep together in their own friendship groups, but otherwise they integrated well into the wider school community and made friends readily among us 'goys' (gentiles). They played in all the sporting teams, were in the Cadets, and especially the orchestra and brass band

because many were very musical. Most of them did well at MHS then went on to tertiary courses and the professions. Many became doctors, lawyers and pharmacists.

The Jewish classmate I got to know best was **Melvin Barnett**, who in Form 6 was the leader of the youth group at his synagogue. Mel was a migrant from England and retained his English accent. He had (and still has) the neatest, most legible handwriting I've ever seen. He was also a skilled black-and-white artist and used to sketch pencil profiles of the other boys in Form 4D. I no longer have the sketch of me that he drew in about 5 minutes, but it was a good likeness. After MHS, Mel graduated in Law and for many years ran a suburban legal practice in Blackburn, only a few blocks from where my sister Ruth lived.

It was Mel who instigated and organised the quinquennial reunions of the 'Class of 1955', which were always a great success. I asked him once why he bothered because it was such a vast undertaking. He explained that he and the other Jewish Old Boys knew that they owed MHS much for having opened up to them pathways into higher education. Those who were post-war immigrants had lived through unspeakable events during the war, MHS was a welcome refuge of order, stability and hope after the years of being DPs. By organising our reunions, Mel was repaying a debt to the school that he and other Jewish boys believed they owed.

The first Greek and Italian students at MHS probably began enrolling in the late 1940s. As well as them were the Germans, Dutch, Czechoslovaks, Hungarians and many British immigrants. Like the Jewish students, they all integrated well. Only their surnames gave any hint that their backgrounds were any different from ours.

One conspicuous group comprised the Chinese students from Malaya and Singapore, who began enrolling in increasing numbers during the early 1950s. They tended to enter the school at the Form 5 level so they could matriculate at the end of Form 6 then go on to university to take degrees in Commerce, Medicine and Engineering. They didn't integrate as well as the other non-Anglos, but we were all polite to each other, and many of us tried to bridge the cultural gap. One of my sceptical friends, Denis Corless, who later became a police prosecutor, said that so many students from Malaya were enrolling that 'MHS' now stood for 'Malayan High School'.

The Chinese chap I had most to do with was **Lum Kong Keong** from Kuala Lumpur, who was in my English classes in both Forms 5 and 6. I was always surprised by the seeming ease with which he could write essays that scored as well as mine, and was amazed at how neat his handwriting was compared to my indecipherable scrawl. The reason he did so well in his studies was that his family at home was making a huge investment in his education; and he knew that he must fulfil his obligations to them by working hard and achieving excellent exam results.

Another Chinese student I got to know was **Ng**, whose other names I forget. He was in my Modern History class in Form 6. Pronouncing his vowel-less name was a challenge. Mr Williamson, our teacher, didn't try to get it right. He simply called Ng 'Dim-Sim', which Ng accepted with good humour. Nowadays, Col Williamson would be censured for racism, but at the time no one dreamt it was that. I enjoyed chatting to Ng, who went on to Architecture at Melbourne University, but unfortunately I didn't see him again after we left MHS.

Lum and I did see each other at university in 1956, when he began a Commerce degree, and I began Arts. I dropped out after one year, but he persevered and graduated with a B.Com. (Hons). Knowing I was slacking that first year at university, he'd counsel me to work harder when I'd see him in the cafeteria at lunch. I disappointed him by quitting university because he rightly believed I'd been wasting both opportunities and resources. I caught up with him again after I resumed my university studies in 1960. He was working on a Master's degree, and we used to see each other and chat in the library. He seemed pleased that I was making a come-back and was working diligently. By that stage he was editing a 'Chinese-

Australian Friendship' journal, which he got printed and distributed on campus. He was always short of material, so he press-ganged me into writing a few articles for him. I think he graduated and returned home at the end of that year, perhaps to help run a family business. Unfortunately, we then lost contact.

Among the hundreds of students in my MHS cohort, in my senior years I made firm friendships with the six I'll briefly mention here. In Form 5 my special mates were **Tony Irvine**, **Ian Riley** and **Peter Walford**. The four of us went around together as a quartet. Ian and Peter had both been with me in Forms 3D and 4D, and we were in the same classes for some of our Form 5 subjects. They were neighbours in Kew and had been at East Kew Central School together. Ian's father was the Minister at the Kew Congregational Church. Peter, a Catholic, had been orphaned and lived with an aunt nearby. The Riley family, being the good Christians they were, watched over him.

Our big adventure for the year was to ride our bikes to Wilson's Promontory and back during the first term vacation. It took us two days each way. We camped at Tidal River and spent a couple of days hiking down to the light house at the southern tip of the Promontory and back. Getting there took most of the day, and we didn't arrive until after dark, mainly because we got lost in a ti-tree swamp on the way. We eventually found the track after wading through water up to our waists and following the telegraph wires, which eventually led us out of the swamp. We overnighted at the light house before marching back to Tidal River the next day.

Unfortunately, the quartet split up at the end of the year. That disappointed me greatly because we'd become a tight-knit friendship group. Tony left MHS to undertake the two-year course in horticulture at the Burnley Horticultural College. Years later, as a plant industry technical officer with the Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Canberra, he completed a botany degree. He then transferred to the CSIRO rainforest forest research station at Atherton in far northern Queensland, where he became the expert on Australia's tropical palms.

The Rileys moved to Canberra in September 1954, and at the end of the year Peter joined them there. Ian and Peter finished their secondary schooling at Canberra High School. Ian then studied Medicine at Sydney University, and after graduating spent much of his medical career in Papua New Guinea as a government medical officer. He eventually became the Professor of Community Medicine at the University of Papua New Guinea. He then moved to the University of Queensland as Professor of Tropical Health. He subsequently became the foundation head of the School of Population (now Public) Health, which was an amalgamation of the Tropical Health Program and the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine.

I've kept in intermittent touch with Ian, who now lives at Bawley Point on the NSW south coast near Bateman's Bay. He married Rae, a fellow medical practitioner, and they had four children. When we occasionally meet, have a phone conversation or swap emails, we naturally fall into talking about our time in PNG, a place that shaped each of our lives and set us on courses we've followed ever since.

Unfortunately, I've lost contact with Peter. After completing his secondary schooling in Canberra, he returned to Melbourne and became an accountant. I saw him a few times during the late 1950s, but we eventually lost touch with each other. Ian tells me that Peter married and now lives in Engadine in Sydney's south. I guess I could make the effort to reconnect with him, but I probably won't. Too many years have passed since we were close buddies.

During Form 6 in 1955 I made new friends with three chaps taking similar subjects to mine. I saw most of **Mark Richmond** because he took the same subjects that I did. As mentioned, Mark later became the archivist to Melbourne University. I also got to know **Jim Gribble** well. He'd been at Gardenvale with me; and I'd continue seeing him at university.

After teaching for several years he became a lecturer in English at Sydney University. **Tom Noble**, like Tony Irvine, was a Richmond boy, and they'd attended the Brighton Street Primary and Toorak Central Schools together. After MHS he went to Toorak Teachers' College, then spent the next five or six years teaching in a series of bush schools. During the 1959–1960 summer vacation, we spent a couple of weeks together driving from one to another meeting the farming families who'd hosted him during his time as the teacher at their local one-room school. It was partly Tom's experience of rural school teaching that eventually persuaded me to go down that track as well. Sadly, I lost touch with these chaps who'd befriended me when I needed friends. They never attended the reunions of the Class of 1955, which would have been one way for reconnecting with them

It was during Form 6, too, that I made my first foray interstate. Tony Irvine and I took the opportunity of the first term vacation to catch up with Ian Riley by hitch-hiking to Sydney. Our plan was to meet him in the camping ground at Eden on the far south coast of New South Wales on the second day out from Melbourne. He and a friend would meanwhile have hitchhiked there from Canberra. Travelling east along the Princes Highway, Tony and I made it to Cann River in East Gippsland the first day.

Various vicissitudes followed as we made our way east and then north along the highway towards Sydney, and then home down the Hume Highway. Briefly:

- At Cann River on the first night, Tony and I slept beside the road, rolling out our sleeping bags beneath a local farmer's milk can stand. We spent a numbingly cold, nearly sleepless night. We discovered why the next morning. We got up to find there'd been a heavy overnight frost. Aching with the cold, we started staggering Sydneywards at about 7.00 a.m. After about a mile we stopped at a timber mill where we could see a large pile of sawdust being burnt off. We sat beside the glowing mound for maybe an hour while we thawed out. Soon after taking to the highway again, we caught our first lift, which took us all the way to Eden. We duly met Ian and his pal Ian Nowak at the camping ground that afternoon. (Peter Walford wasn't available; perhaps he was visiting his aunt in Melbourne.)
- We spent one night staying with my Uncle Bill and Aunty Val Howie at Nowra. To entertain us, Aunty Val introduced us to 'Scrabble', a new board game. I still regularly play it with my grandsons. I regard myself as a highly proficient player, but about four times out of seven, 19-year old Owen beats me effortlessly.
- We arrived at Wollongong after nightfall. We walked out of town a little then camped on a headland among a pile of rocks. Next morning we discovered we'd been sleeping among the tombstones of a derelict cemetery.
- Later that day, after we'd had a swim and were sitting on a rock platform sunbaking, a large wave broke over the platform. The others managed to escape but it picked me up then rolled me over and over across the rocks for about a dozen metres, leaving me with assorted bruises, cuts and scratches to carry to Sydney.
- In Sydney we stayed with Ian's uncle and aunt at Lindfield. From there we made day excursions to see sights like the Harbour Bridge, Manley Beach, the harbour ferries and the Taronga Zoo. One afternoon, Ian and I went to see the great Katharine Hepburn playing opposite Robert Helpmann in a production of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* at the Tivoli Theatre. While we did that, Tony and the other Ian went to an interstate rugby league match.
- On our way back home to Melbourne down the Hume Highway, Tony and I farewelled the two Ians at the Canberra turn-off south of Goulburn. We slept that night in the

changing room at the Yass football ground, despite the pungent smell of the liniment applied there earlier that afternoon. We were just about out of money, with probably only enough for our suburban train fares, so we didn't eat that night or the next morning.

- The final day Tony and I got a lift from the outskirts of Yass to Gundagai. We had to walk several miles out of Gundagai before our next ride. On the way, a motorcycle cop pulled us over for questioning, maybe thinking we were vagrants who were up to no good. He quickly realised we were a couple of harmless schoolkids from Melbourne and let us go, perhaps after taking our names and addresses. We caught our next ride soon afterwards. The driver, a kindly middle-aged businessman making his way back to Melbourne, treated us to a steak-and-eggs lunch in Holbrook, correctly guessing we hadn't eaten and were nearly broke. He obligingly dropped us off outside the Flinders Street railway station after we reached Melbourne at about 9.00 that night.

Looking back on that expedition 67 years later, I'm amazed that my parents allowed me to undertake it, or at least to head off with so little prior planning. From memory, the only money I had was £10, the equivalent of about $360 in present-day values, and no access to more if I should spend or lose it all. That worked out at about $40 a day, which had to cover food, travel and entertainment in Sydney, and various incidentals. The only firm plan we had was to meet the two Ians at Eden on our second day out from Melbourne, and to spend a night with Uncle Bill and Aunty Val at Nowra. I'd never have allowed my own children to make such an excursion so ill-prepared; and I'd be aghast if any of my grandchildren should attempt something similar. On the other hand, it was a good learning experience in fending for myself.

The friends I made during secondary school taught me something important about friendship: friends are to be cherished and friendships nurtured. When you don't have them, you become a lonely isolate. During my time at secondary school I'd experienced several episodes of friendlessness, which taught me that truth. When I made friends, I accordingly worked hard at keeping them.

Another lesson I was learning was that in many activities I was often an outsider—never an 'in-group' member in my classes, teams and other activities. It didn't bother me greatly. I accepted the fact that I wouldn't belong to the clique or faction who were in charge or were the most popular or most respected members. Many decades later my daughter Rosemary, a trained psychologist, introduced me to personality theory, which helped me understand how my personality type had been an important factor in the direction my life had taken. Being an outsider had certain advantages. It allowed one to be an independent thinker, not bound by the 'group-think' of the majority. For an historian, that's an asset.

In 1955 the chief reality for us Sixth Formers was the battery of Matriculation Exams looming ever closer in late November-early December. The MHS Class of 1955 at the time of the exams numbered 210 after several of our number had dropped out during the year. We took our exams in the vast cavernous space of the Melbourne Exhibition Building. Most of us passed. That was probably to be expected, and it was the main reasons why we'd come to MHS. Four MHS students became Exhibitioners. The top student in the state that year was Barrie E. Davidson, a Brighton boy who'd entered MHS in Form 5 after four years at Hampton High School. He gained the Exhibitions in Biology, Chemistry, General Mathematics and Physics, and was also awarded a General Exhibition and won a Senior Scholarship. Barrie went on to a stellar career as a molecular biologist at Melbourne University, where he became a professor in the Department of Biochemistry. He died comparatively young at 64 in 2002.

At some point near the end of the year the annual MHS Speech Night took place in the Melbourne Town Hall. It was the main event on the MHS calendar, a gala occasion at which

the school choir sang, the orchestra and brass bands played, instrumental solos were performed, the prizes were awarded, the Principal delivered his annual address, and a guest speaker spoke. The guest speaker in 1955 was Major-General Sir Frank Kingsley Norris, the Director-General of the Army Medical Service and a Melbourne Grammar School Old Boy. I met him years later, in 1980 when I was researching my first St John Ambulance history. He'd been the Australian Chief Commissioner for the St John Ambulance Brigade during the 1960s, but, disappointingly, by 1980 he was in his dotage and couldn't tell me much.

Speech Night over and Matric Exams behind us, we dispersed into the post-school world. Except for some who went on to Melbourne University or who later attended the Class of 1955 reunions, I never saw most of them again. I don't know what became of them. I do know that many are now dead because I see their obituaries in the online newsletters of the Old Boys' Association. But that's the way of the world: we are born; we are schooled; we enter the world of work; we marry and have children; we retire about 40 years later; and we then try to spend our lives meaningfully until it's time for someone to write our own obituary.

I'll finish this chapter with another poem in Broad Scots sent to me by Hector Clark, who was my next-door neighbour in Lae 1971–1973. Hector has a talent for finding poems by obscure Scottish poets that say exactly what I'm thinking more eloquently than I can. The poem he's just sent, a drinking song, chimes well with these morbid thoughts on the progressive demise of the MHS Class of 1955. Here's the first verse:

Oh, life is a journey we a' hae to gang,
And care is the burden we carry alang
But though grief be our portion and poverty our lot,
We're happy thegither owre a wee drappie o't.

Thanks, Hector! We might now be octogenarians but sharing 'a wee drappie o't' while contemplating the lives we've lived is something we can still enjoy — even if vicariously and *in absentia*, with you in Budapest and me in Canberra.

As for MHS, its Class of 1955 will continue diminishing and eventually disappear; but the school itself will continue, giving chaps like us 1955-ers opportunities we'd not have enjoyed if we hadn't gone there.

6. UNIVERSITY, JOURNALISM AND TEACHERS' COLLEGE

I had three stints at the University of Melbourne: 1956, when I began my B.A. degree; 1960–1961, when I returned to complete the degree; and 1963–1964, when I completed a Dip.Ed. part-time as an external student. Stints two and three were successful; and I felt fulfilled in having completed university qualifications. Stint one was so disappointing that I quit university after only one year — 'dropped out' in the argot of later generations — to become a cadet journalist with the Melbourne *Sun News-Pictorial* newspaper.

First stint at university

Moderately good results in the 1955 Matriculation Examinations secured me a place in the Arts degree program at the University of Melbourne in 1956. I was also awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship, which paid my university fees, and an Education Department secondary teaching bursary, which also paid the fees but included a living allowance as well. I chose the latter.

The Arts degree was structured so that graduating students must have obtained passes in at least one subject in each of four subject groups — foreign languages, sciences, philosophy, and humanities. As well as that, graduation required passes in ten year-long subjects which must include two 'majors' (three consecutive year-long subjects from the same subject groups), a 'minor' (two subjects from the same group) and two other subjects. My plan was to take majors in both English and History, a minor in Geography (in which Geology, my science subject, would count as the first subject), German (my foreign language) and Philosophy I (the foundation course for the philosophy group).

In first year university, 1956, my program would be English I, British History, German I and Geology I. Assuming I passed all four subjects, my second year subjects would be English II, Modern History A and Geography; and in third year, my subjects would be English III, Philosophy I, and one of Modern History B, Australian History, American History or Far Eastern History.

Before lectures began in early March, the Education Department studentship holders spent a fortnight in tutorials in their subjects of choice at the Secondary Teachers' College. The STC was also where we went to receive our fortnightly living allowance.

The university life was very different from that at school. It was basically all in at the deep end and then see who will swim or sink. No solicitous teachers to remind us to write our essays or do our revision.

University lectures were on a grand scale — 500 students in a vast lecture theatre for both English I and British History, about 150 in Geology, and about 60 in German. Apart from the lecture itself, there was no contact with the lecturers, who delivered hour-long lectures twice a week. The weekly tutorials in each subject were generally conducted by inexperienced young tutors, who made little effort to get to know the 15 students in each tutorial classes. The tutors' main preoccupation was their own study program, which was typically research for a M.A. Each subject had a major essay each term, typically of 3,000 words, but neither lecturers nor tutors provided guidance. In addition, Geology had no tutorials but instead included a three-hour laboratory session on Saturday mornings as well as a one-day field excursion on a Saturday once a term.

I felt comfortable only in the Geology classes because the subject matter wasn't greatly different from what I'd already studied in Form 5 two years earlier. In the other subjects I found that the content was vast and the ideas largely beyond me. In German we were expected to read plays and novels in the original German, but my vocabulary was so

restricted it was well-nigh impossible to read them with the book in one hand and my German-English dictionary in the other. Instead, I found it easier to read the English translations in the Melbourne Public Library.

In English we were introduced to the 'modern' poets — T.S. Elliot and Gerard Manley Hopkins, each of whom I found to be impenetrable. The first poem we examined was Hopkins's *'The Windhover'*, which begins like this:

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

I can now see that it's brilliant; but in 1956 I wondered what it all meant, this alliterative accumulation of lines, piling adjectival phrases one on another without regard to normal word order and grammar. I could see that Hopkins had admired the aerobatics of the falcon he'd seen; but why couldn't he say so simply and directly? The lecturers and tutors weren't much help because they assumed we could understand readily.

In British History we studied the constitutional history of England under the Stuart dynasty during the 17th century. After my inspirational History classes in Form 6, it was a great disappointment. It shouldn't have been, because the Stuart Kings gave England the most turbulent times the nation has ever seen since the Norman Conquest almost a thousand years ago. Somehow or another, the lecturer, Associate Professor Kathleen Fitzpatrick (1905–1990), and the tutors, whom I can't remember, failed to convey any sense of the stupendous, epoch-changing events of the Civil War, the victory of the Parliamentarians over the Royalists, the execution of Charles I, and the weary years of Puritan rule under Cromwell's Protectorate. As they taught the subject, it was bookish, sterile and tedious — history devoid of the vibrancy of human affairs.

Just one word, 'demesne', illustrates Katie Fitzpatrick's failure to engage my interest. She had a stellar reputation, but from my experience it was undeserved. She wrote only four books, a meagre number for 27 years as a full-time academic. Her imperious manner daunted those who, like me, didn't think much of her teaching skills; but we wouldn't have dared criticise her. For readers who, like me in 1956, don't know the meaning of 'demesne', it was the portion of a manorial estate that a lord-of-the-manor retained for his own personal use under the feudal land tenure system. Pronounced almost exactly like 'domain', the demesne was usually the land adjacent to the manor house. The rest of the estate was occupied by the lord's tenants.

Early in the course Fitzpatrick used the word often when reviewing the vestiges of England's feudal land tenure system during the early 17th century. I thought she was saying 'domain', which would have referred to the entire estate, not specifically the section used by the lord himself. I only discovered the word 'demesne' later when researching an essay. I came across it in one of the textbooks, G.R. Elton's *England Under the Tudors* (1955). After consulting my *Concise Oxford* dictionary, I realised that it was this word, not 'domain', that Fitzpatrick had been using. Apparently, she had wrongly assumed that we her 500 students, mostly callow 18-year-olders fresh out of secondary school, knew the word and understood what it referred to. If she'd been a half-way decent teacher, she'd have guessed that few in her audience had ever heard of it. She'd then have written the word on the blackboard, explained what it meant, and what its derivation was. She'd also have said how it was pronounced; and she'd have pointed out that it wasn't the same as 'domain' even though

pronounced almost the same way. "'Demesne' is pronounced 'dim-main'", she'd have told us, "and 'domain' as 'doh-main'."

The loss of my studentship

I'd only been at university for several weeks when I was summoned to an interview with the stern Miss Alice Hoy, the Principal of the Secondary Teachers' College. She told me that the medical examination for my studentship had revealed that my eyesight didn't measure up to Education Department standards for employment. She advised me to consult an ophthalmologist, who would report on the state of my eyesight and would perhaps prescribe spectacles that might enable me to pass the eyesight test.

Dad arranged an appointment for me with Dr J. Ringland Anderson (1894–1961), Melbourne's leading ophthalmologist. Dr Anderson was a close friend of my Uncle Rupert. They'd been contemporaries at the university 40 years earlier. He prescribed glasses for me, a heavy horn-rimmed set, which improved my vision appreciably. He didn't tell me, but he contacted Dad to say that I had severe glaucoma and would probably go blind within three years. A life of studying books would be the very worst thing for my eyes, he advised; and what I should be doing instead was outdoor work with no reading. My parents didn't relay this advice to me, probably because they didn't wish to upset me, or perhaps didn't know what they could do for this son-heading-for-blindness. Dr Anderson duly submitted his report to the Education Department, which promptly cancelled my studentship, leaving me without any support at all.

As soon as Miss Hoy conveyed this news to me, I went to the Commonwealth Scholarships office on the university campus. I met the chap in charge, an obliging former secondary teacher, to explain what had just happened, and to ask if I could be given back the Commonwealth Scholarship I'd turned down when accepting the studentship. Easily done! There was one form to fill in and sign, and, that done, the scholarship was restored.

Though my university fees were now covered, I had no living allowance, so I had to go looking for casual work. Picking up jobs from the university employment office, I gardened and did house-cleaning for 10 shillings ($1; nowadays worth about $17) an hour on afternoons when I had no classes. During the term vacations I worked as a casual labourer at W.A. Deutsher Pty Ltd, an engineering factory on Nepean Road in Brighton owned by a chap at my church. And as soon as the university year ended in November, I got a job sorting letters at the central mail exchange on the corner of Spencer and Bourke Streets in Melbourne.

Somehow, I survived 1956 at university, but by the end of second term I knew I didn't wish to continue with my studies. I kept attending lectures but didn't work as hard as earlier. I spent hours in the Rowden White Library, a comfortable venue with the atmosphere of a gentleman's club. My favourite reading was the latest editions of London *Punch*, a popular satirical magazine. I swam in the Beaurepaire Pool, the university's new 25-metre swimming pool. I sat around the cafeteria in the Student Union sipping coffee. I bought and read non-academic books from the university bookstore. I soon learned that many pleasant diversions awaited students avoiding the hard grind of studying courses they weren't enjoying.

I also enrolled in a driving school, learned to drive, and gained my diving licence, which I've now held for 66 years continuously. My parents never owned a car, and I had no access to one, but I guessed that being able to drive and having a licence would be useful. Discounted driving lessons were among the perks of being a member of the Student Union, so I took full advantage of them and probably skipped lectures to take the lessons. I had only five or six lessons before the instructor guessed I was ready for the test. I passed both the

theory and practical tests easily, so at least I had a driver's licence to show as one positive outcome from my first year at university.

When the exam results were published, I surprised myself by passing in both Geology and English. As I guessed I would, I failed both British History and German.

These indifferent results didn't bother me greatly because I'd already decided what I wished to do in 1957. I would become a journalist. To that end I'd already applied to both the Melbourne *Age* and *Herald* newspapers for positions as a 'cadet reporter', i.e. a trainee journalist. The interview at the *Age* didn't go well. The chief-of-staff (i.e. head of the newsroom) who interviewed me was antagonistic. (I later discovered from others he'd interviewed that that was his accustomed manner of dealing with would-be employees.) The *Herald* interview went much better and concluded with the offer of a cadetship on the *Sun News-Pictorial*, the *Herald's* stablemate, a morning tabloid. I was given a starting date, Monday 31 December 1956, and told to present myself to the *Sun* chief-of-staff at 2.00 p.m. that day.

Looking back on the loss of my studentship, I can now appreciate what a huge blow it was. At the time I mightn't have realised how thoroughly it knocked the stuffing out of me. I lost confidence and direction. Rejected by the Education Department, I guessed I could never be a teacher. Life as a full-time, self-supporting university student seemed a poor alternative. And so my thoughts had turned to journalism.

What I now also realise is that I wasn't yet ready for university. I was too young. I'd just turned 18 and had little experience of the world outside school. I was too immature, insecure and intellectually unsophisticated. Sitting in tutorial classes with opinionated, outspoken, self-confident classmates made me embarrassingly aware of my own ignorance and gaucherie. If asked to express an opinion I blushed and mumbled; and I couldn't sustain an argument to justify my viewpoint, if indeed I had one. I could see that Melbourne High School had emphasised essay-writing skills at the expense of oral expression. (It took me a couple more decades to become a confident public speaker.) My reading and writing skills were nevertheless insufficiently developed. Writing essays was a burdensome labour; and reading academic textbooks even more so. I was also poorly motivated. Being at university simply because I'd obtained good Matric exam results, or because my parents and teachers expected me to become a university student, were insufficient reasons for taking a place there. To survive at university required a level of commitment that I lacked.

The cadet reporter

I spent only 18 months as a *Sun* cadet, but during that time I did some fast growing up. As I soon discovered, the newspaper trade is unforgiving. It expects the best from its employees all the time. It doesn't tolerate sloppy work and pressures journos to attain high standards. Making errors of fact, particularly when members of the newspaper-reading public phone or write to point out the errors, is sure to earn the careless cadet a swift kick.

The career path for a newspaper reporter was to spend four years' in-service training as a cadet. The *Sun* provided no training sessions for cadets. Management assumed we'd acquire reporting skills by practising them. At the end of four years, the former cadet would be 'graded', i.e. assigned to the hierarchy of fully-trained journalists — D (lowest grade), C, B and A. The A-grade journalists were the respected masters of their craft, top-echelon journos who often had their own regular column and were periodically rotated to the *Sun's* most important interstate and overseas bureaus, for example, Canberra, London and Washington. The D-grade journos were either ambitious former cadets who were on their way up fast and using their first grading as a stepping stone to senior postings, or they were hacks with few

prospects of promotion who were undertaking the ordinary humdrum work of daily newspaper journalism.

At any one time, the *Sun* had a dozen or more cadets distributed across the four-year training period. Those ahead of me were Bill Turnbull, Scott Palmer, Ken Burslem, Max Grant, Harry Smith, Tony Frewin, Mike Schildberger, Noel Carrick, John Scott and David Webb. Those following soon behind were Bryan Frith, Robina Fleetwood, Gary Raphael and Bob Kearsley. They all went their different ways after their time at the *Sun*. Only half of them — David Webb, Ken Burslem, Mike Schildberger, Scott Palmer, Bryan Frith, Gary Raphael and Bob Kearsley — remained in journalism; and only Scott Palmer continued at the *Sun*.

The graded *Sun* journos were a variegated lot. Probably most had worked for various newspapers around Australia. A few were hard-bitten military veterans who could keep us cadets entertained with tales of their wartime exploits. Some were immigrants from the UK, others from New Zealand, and occasionally from the US. One who became a friend of mine was a Malaysian bloke, Dahara Ali, from the *Straits Times* in Singapore, who was working at the *Sun* for several months to gain Australian experience. Our subeditors thought highly of him, but I was one of the few in the newsroom who spent much time chatting with him. After he returned to Singapore, he sent me a Christmas card wishing me all the best in my journalistic career. Others I used to like chatting with were the interstate representatives, chaps with offices in the Herald & Weekly Times building, from which they sent Melbourne dispatches to their newspapers in Adelaide, Perth, Sydney and Brisbane.

On my first day at the *Sun*, I was paired with a second-year cadet, Bill Turnbull, who'd been at Melbourne High School with me. I tagged around after him for the next few days, going with him to the jobs he was assigned, reading the reports he wrote after he'd finished them back in the newsroom. I observed how each sentence was separately typed on a fresh sheet of copy paper measuring about 21 by 15 centimetres. The finished 'story' was then fastened together with a paper-clip and dropped into the in-tray of the editorial room, where a panel of subeditors were busy editing the hundreds of stories being churned out that day by the reporters in the newsroom.

After a few days as Bill's understudy, I was assigned to 'market rounds', reporting on the wholesale prices of fruit and vegetables at the Victoria Market, eggs sold via the Egg Marketing Board, potatoes marketed by the Potato Marketing Board, and livestock sold at the Newmarket Saleyards. Market rounds was a common starting point for new cadets like me. The market rounds reporter spent his — no 'hers': female cadets were assigned to the social pages — first three hours phoning all the produce marketing agencies to obtain the average price of commodities sold that day. He'd then type up his 'story' — a list of prices in the various categories, e.g. 'tomatoes 2/6 lb.' [2 shillings & 6 pence a pound]; 'potatoes 9d. lb.' [9 pence a pound]; 'eggs 3/10 doz.' [3 shillings & 10 pence per dozen]; 'fat lambs £2/03/08 ea.' [2 pounds 3 shillings & 8 pence each]. That would take the next three hours, after which I'd deliver my story to the subeditors.

This was a fiddly, tedious job even for a competent typist; but I couldn't yet type, and so the task was particularly onerous as I pecked away two-finger style on a heavy, ancient manual office typewriter. The *Sun* threw its new cadets in at the deep end. Senior staff simply expected that the cadets could type and that if they couldn't already do so they'd soon pick it up. A kindly senior executive's secretary took pity on me one evening after noticing me laboriously tapping out my story during my second or third week on the job. She briefly explained the principles of touch-typing to me: the four fingers of the left hand cover 'qwerty' in the top row of keys while the right hand is covering 'uiop[]', and the thumb is for the space-bar; similarly for the keys in the middle and bottom rows. Applying her timely lesson, within a few days I was typing reasonably fast and accurately.

All went well for several weeks until one afternoon the chief-of-staff told me in a state of high indignation that the price of tomatoes in that morning's edition had been wrong — '2/4 lb.' instead of '2/6 lb.'. Being bawled out in a room full of other journos was embarrassing. I stammered that such errors wouldn't recur, then made sure I always double-checked everything I wrote. A couple of weeks later the clerk at the Victoria Market I used to ring for the vegetable prices complimented me on the accuracy of my price lists. "We've come to expect that the *Sun's* vegetable prices will often be wrong," she said, "but since you've been writing them up they've always been correct. My boss has asked me to thank you."

The purpose of such mundane tasks, of course, was to teach the cadet the absolute necessity for accurate reportage in every story no matter how apparently inconsequential.

Shipping rounds

After market rounds, I was 'promoted' to shipping rounds. To my relief, the next incoming cadet, Bryan Frith, took over market rounds. Bryan later went on to a career as the Finance Editor at *The Australian*. Shipping rounds involved ringing all the shipping companies to find out what ships were arriving in or departing from the Port of Melbourne the next day, and at what times, and where their berths were.

This was an improvement on market rounds, but shipping rounds still had hazards for the unwary. I discovered this several weeks later when I was summoned to the office of Frank Daly, the Editor. In that day's shipping notes I'd written that the P&O passenger liner *Orsova*, was sailing from Station Pier at Port Melbourne at 12.00 p.m.; but the typesetter had written 2.00 p.m. Several passengers who'd checked the departure time in the *Sun* had arrived late and missed the boat. P&O had then been obliged to fly them to Adelaide, the next port of call. The P&O general manager had written a stiff note of protest to the Editor, saying that the company would have to advise its passengers to disregard the *Sun's* shipping notes. Mr Daly could appreciate how easily the mistake had occurred so advised me to write '12.00 noon' and '12.00 midnight' in future.

My carpeting by Frank Daly was probably mild compared to that of Gary Raphael, who'd started several months behind me. Gary's great gaffe was to confuse Dame Mabel Brookes, a prominent Melbourne socialite who chaired the council of the Queen Victoria Hospital, with the wife of the long-serving Victorian Governor, Sir Dallas Brooks. Gary reported some event attended by the vice-regal couple. His story began by saying that the guests of honour were the Governor, Sir Dallas Brooks, and his wife Dame Mabel Brookes. This happened several months after I'd quit the *Sun*, so I wasn't present to witness the firestorm engulfing Gary.

Bob Kearsley, the next cadet after Gary, told me about it after we ran into each other in Collins Street several weeks later. The *Sun* chief-of-staff, Stewart Legge, a social climber who knew both the Brooks and Brookes families, was apoplectic with rage, so he'd have given Gary a mauling before he had to face Frank Daly. Somehow Gary survived that debacle. About 30 years later I'd occasionally meet him in Canberra, where he'd moved after a long career as a journo on London's famous Fleet Street. Bob Kearsley's career also prospered. He became a TV journalist and a news director with Channel 9 and the ABC in Melbourne and the BBC in London.

Police rounds

From shipping rounds I moved up a step to police rounds. This involved being on duty in the press room at Russell Street Police headquarters at 7.00 a.m. on Sundays. The task was to

collect and collate police accident reports from all round Victoria, mainly road accidents, then write up a story for the next day's newspaper. This was always a sad duty because inevitably there'd be six or more road deaths; and I could imagine what grief was being felt by the relatives as I was writing my report. Occasionally there'd be some variety as the police made arrests for robberies, assaults, and factory and home 'breaking-and-entering' incidents. On average, about once a fortnight there'd be a murder, but for those the job would be given to one of the specialist crime reporters, for instance the veteran Alan Dower, who'd been a commando during the war.

Various experiences during my stint of police rounds made me realise that daily journalism wasn't for me. While I guessed I'd eventually become a competent reporter if I stuck at it, I began doubting that was where my future should lie.

Journalists collectively, and especially the graded journos permanently assigned to police rounds, seemed to be a hard-bitten group. They saw much of the seamy side of life. They dealt daily with human frailty and fallibility. They were also lied to so often by those they were interviewing that scepticism and cynicism became second nature to them. Many were callous, hard-drinking, chain-smoking womanisers whose personal lives were often chaotic. While I admired some of them for their journalistic talents, I didn't wish to end up as a middle-aged reprobate like many of them.

The one incident demonstrating my limitations occurred one Sunday on police rounds. Russell Street Police HQ had received an overnight report from the Ballarat police about an accidental death. A young recently married chap in Ballarat had been cutting firewood with an unguarded circular saw. He'd turned round to grasp the next log when he stepped on a billet of wood, which rolled from beneath him. Losing his balance, he fell backward into the saw. The saw blade ripped through him, killing him almost instantly. His young pregnant wife was standing by watching. Horrified, I took my notes then returned to the press room and wrote a detailed, competent story.

Several hours later, the chief-of-staff, Stewart Legge, rang me to say I'd written a good report but hadn't taken the story far enough. "You should have immediately taken a staff car and a photographer to Ballarat to interview the wife!" he explained. "I couldn't do that, Stewart," I replied, "because the last thing she would have wanted would be to talk to some insensitive, nosey reporter from Melbourne." Stewart ended the conversation by saying that's what an enterprising journalist would have done.

To be an 'enterprising' journalist, I'd need to develop an ability to dissociate myself from the facts of the stories I was writing. Call it what you will — 'enterprise', 'initiative', 'killer-instinct' — I lacked the qualities to become a Walkley Award-winning journo; and I wasn't content to be a disillusioned D-grade hack reporter for the rest of my life.

I'm not sure that Stewie Legge himself would have pursued the Ballarat story as he thought I should. A *Sun* institution in his own right, he was an enigma. Short, well-padded, with a bristling moustache, he was always dapper in his tweed suits. He lived in Toorak and was a dreadful snob. He was a Scotch Old Collegian who believed that the private school Old Boys — Ken Burslem (Scotch) and Max Grant (Wesley) — were inherently superior to government school products like Bryan Frith, Bob Kearsley and me. Perhaps he made an exception for me because I was from Melbourne High School and he knew George Langley, the recently retired MHS principal. "I met Saint Langley at dinner last night, dear boy," he greeted me one afternoon as I arrived in his office to collect my list of assignments. 'Dear boy' was Stewie's accustomed mode of addressing us cadets. As his eyes engaged with ours over the horn-rimmed spectacles perched on the end of his nose, his 'dear boy' was auspicious. It meant he was in a good mood. "Dear boy," he might have said, "if you'd gone to Ballarat to interview the wife of that chap killed by a circular saw, your story would have

been so much better. And much better still if accompanied by a photo of the grieving widow!"

General reporting

In the meantime I undertook general reporting. On arriving for duty at 2.00 p.m., I'd be given a list of maybe half a dozen story leads to be followed up. This usually involved going to the scene of some incident, finding out what had happened, interviewing those involved, and getting a photograph if I was accompanied by a *Sun* photographer. The incidents were many and varied. I remember attending a railway derailment; interviewing a Salvation Army officer who'd just turned 100; spending a couple of hours on a Harbour Trust tugboat as background for a story about the tugs' activities around the port; going to the retirement party of the chief signalman at the Spencer Street railway station; being sent to watch the racing car driver Lex Davidson win the Australian Driving Champion in a Ferrari; going to the West Melbourne Stadium to see a performance by the Afro-American rock star, 'Little Richard'; and visiting a middle-aged single mother in an inner suburb — Fitzroy? Richmond? — whose well-maintained bungalow had been vandalised. Having taken my notes in a reporter's notebook in pencil — Why pencil? It was the custom. — I'd return to the newsroom, write up my stories then lodge them with the subeditors.

A regular duty on Monday evenings was to attend and sit through suburban municipal council meetings. I recall going to meetings in the Richmond, Kew, Footscray, Brunswick, Brighton and Hawthorn town halls. This was an excruciatingly boring exercise because most often nothing happened. The meetings usually started at 7.00 p.m. and often went on until midnight. Usually the time was spent with long-winded councillors expatiating on their favourite topics. Occasionally there'd be an interesting or controversial topic, and I could manage to beat up a half dozen paragraphs about it. At about 10.00 p.m. I'd leave the meeting, find my way to the nearest public telephone booth, call the newsroom to dictate my story to the copy-typist, and then, depending which town hall I'd visited, catch a succession of trams, buses and trains home. In winter these journeys were cold and cheerless, so I'd look forward to coming home to a warm house, which I might reach by about 11.45 p.m.

In my time as a cadet, I appreciated how the job was becoming an important part of my informal education. Interviewing people in person and over the phone gave me confidence. The variety or stories I had to write taught me that there wasn't any topic I couldn't tackle. Each new topic was one to be dealt with so that the *Sun's* readers could readily understand what was going on in Melbourne. The subeditors' continual pressure to write short, concise, sentences changed my writing style. Writing that way helped me to appreciate that the reading public wants information presented in a readily comprehensible style. The convoluted prose of, say, academic historians might be an elegant style beloved by other academic historians; but it wasn't what the general reading public wanted.

I also learned that new cadets become the butt of office jokes. The journos were forever playing tricks on each other, with the newest and most callow cadets being the most common victims. One of my fellow cadets, Scott Palmer (1937–2002), a couple of years ahead of me, caught me out one evening. He rang the phone on my desk and said he was the Bendigo correspondent calling in with that afternoon's local horse race results. As customary, the person taking such a call would type up the story as it was read out over the phone, read it back to the correspondent, then take it to the subeditors. That's what I did. Half an hour later a subeditor came to my desk to give me back my copy. "This is old news," he said; "it was in this morning's edition." Scott had been sitting at a desk four or five metres from mine, reading out a story from that morning's racing page as I dutifully wrote it down. He died

earlier this year at age 84 after having become famous in Melbourne as a sporting journalist — an authority on the Australian Football League in particular.

On another occasion, Mike Courtney (1931–1998), a senior journalist whom I liked and respected, was sitting at the desk next to mine. Probably at a loose end and seeking entertainment at my expense, he rang my phone and said he was a member of the public calling in to report an amazing experience. A flying saucer had just landed in his front yard, and little green men were climbing from it. Crank phone calls of this kind were common. People would call the *Sun* switchboard with some sensational story; the switchboard operator would relay the call to the newsroom, and whichever journalist happened to answer the phone would have to deal with it. The polite way of handling the call was to jot down the details, take the caller's name and number, thank them, try to end the call as soon as possible, then explain to the chief-of-staff what had happened. When Mike called me, I recognised his voice, so I swung round in my chair to face him. "How very interesting! Thank you for your call, sir," I said; "It so happens that our staff UFO correspondent, Mike Courtney, is in the office at present; so if you hold on for a couple of seconds, I'll transfer your call to him." We then had a good laugh over Mike's preposterous attempt to hoodwink me. Mike went on to an illustrious career as the pioneering editor of the *Launceston Examiner* in Tasmania.

My interactions with senior journos like Mike were not always as amiable. Most of them could appreciate that I was diligent and trying hard to acquire the requisite skills. They saw that some of my stories were being published in the front pages rather than buried at about page 34. Some, however, were inherently hostile to cadets. Forgetting their own days as new cadets, they generally regarded us as an irksome if necessary aspect of journalism. They were often irritable and impatient with us.

The one senior journo I truly disliked was a one-armed chap called Alan Dunne, the chief sports subeditor. He was a renowned bully, infamous for yelling at cadets. He came striding into the newsroom one evening. "Where's Willis?" he bellowed. Someone indicated where I was sitting. He marched over to my desk. "Are you Willis?" I nodded. "This is rubbish!" he exclaimed, tossing my story on the desk. "Rewrite it!" "What's wrong with it?" I asked hesitantly. "If you can't see what's wrong with it, you'll never be a journalist!" he proclaimed, turning on his heel to stomp back to the subeditors' room across the corridor. I reread my story. It was well-written and clearly answered all six of the reporter's customary questions — Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? I rearranged a few sentences then took it back to him. He cast his eye over it. "Better, but make sure you don't deliver me more rubbish!" he grunted, dismissing me with a wave of the leather-encased stub of his arm. The term 'corporate psychopath' hadn't yet been invented, but his treatment of cadets displayed the classic symptoms.

Finance rounds

The experience that prompted me to quit the *Sun* was my rotation to finance rounds — reporting on the sale of stocks and shares at the Melbourne Stock Exchange. Like market rounds, shipping rounds and police rounds, finance rounds was another facet of daily journalism that cadets had to learn.

The Stock Exchange is an elaborate auction room in which stocks and shares in public companies are bought and sold. At the daily afternoon call — sale — the auctioneer worked his way alphabetically through several hundred listed companies. As he called each company name, the selling stockbrokers shouted how many shares they wished to sell and at what price; the buyers then bid for them, yelling in competition with each other. The auctioneer would apportion blocks of shares to the competing buyers. The auctioneer's assistants, and the journos reporting the call, wrote down how many shares changed hands, and what the

opening and closing prices were. For instance, 'Austral 100,000, 9/9, 10/1' signified that 100,000 Austral Bakeries shares were sold with an opening price of 9 shillings & 9 pence and a closing price of 10 shillings & 1 penny.

All this took place in rapid-fire staccato jargon which to an outsider sounded like a cacophony of foreign languages being shouted simultaneously. The cadet new to finance rounds would sit beside an experienced colleague watching what he was doing and trying to work out what was going on. It took a week or more to learn the jargon and another week to master the skill of writing down the number of shares sold and the prices. My tutor was Ken Burslem, who had just won a job as a TV journalist at Channel 9 and would be quitting the *Sun* in several weeks. By the time Ken left, I was ready to take over. Even though I'd got the hang of the job, it was always stressful. With my opposite number on the *Age*, I'd check my figures against the records kept by the stock exchange clerks; we'd then agree on the numbers sold and the prices, which meant that both the *Sun* and *Age* would be publishing the same figures the next day. After that was done, I'd write up my report, walk back to the *Sun* headquarters in the Herald and Weekly Times building on the corner of Flinders and Exhibition Streets, and hand my copy to Jack Donovan, the testy, irascible finance editor.

Jack Donovan was notorious for giving his cadets a hard time, but after a few weeks of speaking to me in gruff monosyllables, he mellowed. He could see I was tackling the job diligently, and that my work was accurate. After that I enjoyed a genial relationship with him and the other two graded journos on the finance staff, Gerry Carrington and Barry Flint. All three were Catholics, and the Catholic-Protestant divide was still an important line of social cleavage then; however, I got on well with them, even though they knew I was a church-attending Methodist.

A mini-scandal

A minor sensation occurred during my months on finance rounds. It involved Barry Flint's wife, a handsome, well-groomed blonde woman in her late 30s. Other cadets swooned over her, but I sensed a hardness beneath the glamorous public image. She ran off with a Catholic priest who'd been instructing her in the Catholic faith in lessons leading up to her formal acceptance into the church. It turned out that she'd been a call-girl before marrying Barry. When Barry and Gerry were absent, Jack Donovan shared his views of the affair with me. She must have taught the priest a few lessons of her own, he chuckled.

Truth, the Melbourne weekly scandal sheet, got hold of the story and sent one of its disreputable reporters to the *Sun* finance room to interview Barry. His tactic was emotional blackmail: "You may as well cooperate with us and tell me what you know," he said to Barry, "because we'll eventually get to the bottom of this story; and it will look better for you if you help rather than hinder our investigation." He and Barry went off somewhere together to talk. I have no idea what Barry told him, but a few days later the story was splashed all over the front page of *Truth's* next edition.

This must have greatly embarrassed Barry around the office and at the Stock Exchange. Wherever he went, people were pointing him out and nattering about him behind his back. Knowing I worked in the finance room with him, various *Sun* staff members tried quizzing me about him. I politely feigned ignorance, correctly claiming that Barry didn't discuss his private life with me. A few days after the *Truth* exposé, Barry took me aside and said, "You've heard about my private life in this office. Please regard it as confidential, and don't discuss it with anyone else!" I assured Barry that I respected his privacy and wasn't gossiping about him with anyone.

I met Barry again a few years later, after we ran into each other in Myers during one of my rare visits to the CBD. We greeted each other warmly. He seemed pleased to see me and

to discover that I'd become a teacher. I can't remember if he was still with the *Sun*, but a year or two after our meeting someone told me he'd died. I have no idea what became of his ex-wife and the priest. One rumour that had done the rounds at the time was that Archbishop Dan Mannix, the head of the church in Victoria, was hiding them in the vaults at 'Raheen', his mansion in Kew.

The end of a journalistic career

The tedium and stress of finance rounds prompted me to think of other career options. By this stage, mid-1958, my Melbourne High School pal, Tom Noble, had graduated from Toorak Teachers' College and had begun his career as a rural school teacher. When I occasionally met him, he'd tell me what a great life it was. "You're your own boss. The inspector only visits you one day a year. The community looks up to you. The kids are quiet and easy to teach; and teaching them to read and write and do arithmetic is very fulfilling. The world of nature is just outside the school door, and you'll see emus, parrots, kangaroos, possums and wombats in the playground, and the koalas aren't far away in the bush behind the school. The pay's pretty good, and the hours of work and the holidays can't be beaten in any other job!"

Day-dreaming at the Stock Exchange, I'd be thinking of Tom living out his bucolic idyll somewhere in the bush. I began thinking that if I switched to teaching I, too, could be enjoying that life instead of totting up the totals of shares traded that day.

Taking decisive action, one day I visited Education Department headquarters in Treasury Place, off Spring Street at the top end of Collins Street and only a couple of blocks from the Herald and Weekly Times building. I found the branch that dealt with primary teacher recruitment and inquired about the possibility of becoming a primary teacher. I was given an application form for a primary teachers' college studentship, which I duly filled out and lodged.

A few days later I received a letter with a medical report form attached. The letter explained that as my earlier secondary studentship had been withdrawn because of eyesight problems, I must be examined by a reputable ophthalmologist who would then report on the current state of my eyesight. The suggested specialist was Sir Thomas a'Beckett Travers (1902–1999), one of Melbourne's leading ophthalmologists. I made an appointment with him. He gave me a thorough examination, having already seen the report Dr Anderson had written about my purported glaucoma two years earlier. He said that apart from an astigmatism in my left eye, my eyes were healthy and without any sign of glaucoma. He then said that Dr Anderson was a greatly respected ophthalmologist but had clearly misdiagnosed my condition. He finished by saying he'd recommend to the Education Department that I be granted a studentship.

Several days after this I received the offer of a studentship at Toorak Teachers' College, starting in February 1959. After accepting the offer, I decided to quit the *Sun*, where I was earning only £6 a week — $198 in current values, and less than a quarter of the present minimum wage for a 38-hour week. I was also on night-shift, 2.00–11.00 p.m., which I hated. I knew I could easily pick up a day-shift job paying at least double that amount to tide me over until my teachers' college course began. I submitted my resignation and left the *Sun* a fortnight later, in June 1958. Several of my senior colleagues there expressed their regrets, kindly saying I'd started well as a cadet and had the makings of a good journo.

Ken Burslem

The one enduring friendship I made at the *Sun* was with Kenneth Gordon Burslem (1936-2022). I was Ken's understudy in my first weeks at the Stock Exchange, before he went off to

Channel 9 to begin his long and distinguished career as a TV journalist and news director. I'd also worked with him from time to time on police rounds.

I both admired and envied Ken. He was of medium height, slim and athletic with blonde good looks, and he wore his well-tailored suits well. He also drove an MG sports car and had a gorgeous girlfriend, Jill, who, like him, lived in Toorak. Jill, with her corn-coloured wavy hair, blue eyes, double row of pearls, lambswool twin sets and matching skirts, and her elegant high heels, seemed like the ideal girlfriend. She was a young woman for whose smile of approval I'd have run to the ends of the earth.

Ken seemed to have it all — Jill, an MG, a natural and unaffected savoir-faire; he was from a land-owning family with a Toorak townhouse, and he had the self-assurance that came from being Scotch College-educated. On top of that, he was genial, even-tempered, well-mannered, of unfailing good humour, non-judgemental, and accepting of others. No surprise that he was popular everywhere he went. He was also a true journalistic professional —a highly accomplished and versatile journo who could turn his hand to any journalistic task in a variety of news media. He was also an accomplished writer, and highly enterprising in seeking out new challenges.

After Ken departed the *Sun* for Channel 9, I used to see him occasionally presenting news stories on TV. He subsequently had an eminent career as a wide-roving reporter. In 1960 he reported on the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa for Channel 9 and was the first Australian journalist to get there. He later worked on Fleet Street and met his wife, Christine, a ballerina, on the ship to England. While working in the US in the 1980s he won a prestigious US Thorp Prize for reporting on whales in northern Alaska.

I didn't meet Ken again for another eight years after he left the *Sun*. One Saturday morning in early 1965 we ran into each other in the shopping centre in Wewak, Papua New Guinea. By that time we were both married with little children. He'd gone to Wewak as manager of *'Redio Wewak — Stesin biling Yumi'* ('Radio Wewak — Station Belong You-Me', i.e. 'our radio station'). Margaret, Rosie and I were at Brandi High School, and Margaret was pregnant with Tony. We and the Burslems — Ken, Christine and two sons, Guy and Christopher (Heath and Ivana arrived later) — visited each other and we socialised together fairly often. We also enjoyed various adventures together, for example clambering up along the Brandi River gorge to a swimming hole deep in the jungle. Suspended over the pool was a genuine 'Tarzan' rope — a liana hanging down from the jungle canopy. We could swing out over the pool before dropping into the water without fear of crocodiles lurking nearby.

We have very fond and grateful memories of the dinners to which the Burslems invited us, in both Wewak and later Melbourne. Christine was a superlative hostess. She was a *cordon bleu* chef whose dinner parties were renowned for their elegance. Ballet had been her first art form; but in being a stylish, gracious hostess, Christine had found another endeavour in which to demonstrate her virtuosity.

About 1967 Ken and Christine went off to Mount Hagen, where Ken managed the local radio station. Clan Burslem visited us in Lae in early 1968 several months after we'd moved there from Wewak. Christine's parents, Jack & Tui Stephenson from Auckland, joined us in Lae on the University of Technology campus the next year, 1969, when Jack took a job lecturing in Business Studies. They became our friends and remained there for the rest of our time in Lae, until our departure for the UK in August 1973. About 1971 the Burslems returned to Melbourne, where Ken got a news reporting job with Channel 10 TV. They subsequently spent a long time in Los Angeles. We then lost touch with them because we'd gone to the UK and then subsequently ended up in Canberra.

We reconnected with the Burslems in the late 1980s, when they moved to Canberra from LA after Ken got a job running the Channel 10 Canberra news bureau. He'd only had

the job about six months when Channel 10 shut down the bureau and pulled out of Canberra. He received compensation because he'd been enticed from LA where they were well settled, so they stayed on in Canberra for about a year and lived in a smart apartment they'd bought in Kingston. Then they moved to Bangkok, where Christopher, one of their three sons (all journos), was editor of the local English language newspaper. Based in Thailand, Ken became a consultant in news media development around SE Asia; and he also taught journalism in universities, supported by AusAID grants. By the turn of the century Ken had drifted into retirement. We used to see him and Christine every two or three years because they'd return to Canberra to check out their apartment and their furniture in storage. Whenever we reconnected, we readily renewed the friendship as if the intervening years hadn't happened.

Sadly, Ken died in January this year in Perth, where their daughter, Ivana, another journo, lives. In the months before he died, Ken published a history he'd been working on for years — *The Horse Soldier and The Cameleer: A true story of two ANZAC brothers who answered the final battle call for history's most iconic soldiers, the cavalry*. It's a biographical study of his father's and uncle's experiences as light horsemen in the desert campaigns in Egypt, Palestine and Syria 1916–1918. As a first book from an author who didn't train as an historian, it's absolutely first-rate — the kind of superlative book that wins literary awards. Christine tells me that Ken was reluctant to send me a copy because he feared that, being a practising historian, I'd find fault with it. He needn't have worried. *The Horse Soldier and The Cameleer* demonstrates that not only was Ken a superlative writer but was a meticulous historian as well. His book is just about the best personal memoir from World War I that I've ever seen.

For me, Ken's most outstanding quality was that he was among the most decent human beings I've ever encountered. I never saw him angry; and I never heard him say anything unkind about anyone. Of course we laughed much over the human foibles of people we'd known together at the *Sun*, e.g. Stewie Legge, our chief-of-staff, Jack Donovan, the finance editor, and Alan Dunne, the humiliator of cadets; but for Ken it was never malicious. I might relish the *schadenfreude* of someone pompous or unjust getting his comeuppance, but for Ken there was no unkindness in the jesting.

The Penal Department

A few days after quitting the *Sun*, I applied for admission into the Victorian Public Service, which was advertising for recruits. About a week later I sat the VPS entrance exam, which I breezed through. I started work shortly afterwards, in the Penal Department, a small branch of the Chief Secretary's Department situated in the Old Treasury Building, a gracious three-storey Italianate edifice on Spring Street facing the intersection with Collins Street.

The task of the Penal Department was to coordinate Victoria's gaol system, which comprised Pentridge Gaol in Coburg, the Fairlea Women's Prison in Fairfield and about eight regional gaols in places like Ballarat, Beechworth, Bendigo and Geelong. Among the department's chief functions was the maintenance of the prisoner database, consisting of large prisoner record cards, which, replete with the inmate's mugshot, had to be continually updated as new prisoners were sent from the courts to the gaols, prisoners were transferred between gaols, additional time added for infringements during custody, and prisoners whose sentences had expired were released. The unit also processed the monthly returns from each prison, arranged for stores and supplies to be sent to them, supervised prison staff recruitment and training, and oversaw the prisoner education program.

All this work was carried out by an administrative staff of about ten — the departmental secretary, two directors, a chief clerk and his assistant, four junior clerks and a typist. My

main task was to keep the prisoner record cards updated as the prisons continuously sent in data. The cards were stored alphabetically in a bank of filing cabinets. Sifting and sorting the cards, I inevitably saw the prisoners' mugshots. I was surprised by how many names and faces I recognised. They included people I'd seen around Brighton, chaps I'd been to school with, and various individuals made notorious by the press coverage they'd received during their trials.

In one case, the mugshot was of a former Brighton chap who'd been in my class at primary school. He'd lived a few doors from me in Edgar Street, and had been in 5th Brighton cub pack with me ten years earlier. He'd recently served a one-year sentence for car theft. A few weeks after I'd seen his record card, I met him one afternoon on my way home from work. He was standing outside Flinders Street station as I approached to catch my train. I hadn't seen in in nearly ten years but I immediately knew who he was. I nodded in greeting, and in our brief moment of eye contact I could tell he remembered me. He looked coldly through me, however, without a glimmer of recognition. I often wondered what became of him because even as a Grade 3 pupil he'd behaved dishonestly. He used to nick classmates' possessions, then boast about it later so we'd know how clever he was; and he played cruel tricks on other children which caused them much distress. I guess he might have had psychopathic tendencies. He was the only child of respected older parents, so I guess his criminal record must have grieved them greatly.

One of my early jobs in the Penal Department was to finalise the clerical work generated by the notorious last judicial flogging of a prisoner in Victoria. This mainly consisted of updating the prisoner's record card, noting that the sentence had been carried out at Pentridge in the prescribed manner — on a heavy wooden triangle to which the prisoner's wrists and ankles were strapped.

As a lifelong opponent of corporal and capital punishment, I was appalled by the grisly details of this deed of official retribution. Anyone looking online for descriptions of floggings will soon realise that it's the most barbaric, inhumane punishment imaginable. Having read a few journalists' reports of floggings in Victoria, I came round to thinking that any judge who sentenced a man to a flogging deserved to have been flogged himself. He might then have realised what a fiendishly cruel punishment he was ordering.

The prisoner flogged was William John O'Meally (1920–1995), a career criminal. In 1952 O'Meally had shot and killed a young police constable who had caught him trying to steal a car in Caulfield. Found guilty, he received the death penalty, but the government later commuted this to life imprisonment. O'Meally had tried to escape from Pentridge Gaol twice after that. At the last attempt, in 1957, he shot and wounded a warder. His sentence for that offence was 12 strokes of the cat-o'-nine-tails. He received this barbaric punishment on 1 April 1958.

O'Meally was eventually paroled in 1979 after 27 years' imprisonment. By then he was Victoria's longest serving prisoner and had been tamed by the prison system. In subsequent interviews with journalists, he said the lash had torn open his flesh, exposing his ribs. He had taken three months to recover from his wounds.

After six months of being a Penal Department filing clerk, I left behind O'Meally and his thousands of fellow felons in the departmental filing cabinets. I resigned from the VPS because the end of the year had come. I was due to start at teachers' college in another month; and before then I wanted to spend a few weeks away from work and study.

First motor car

Meanwhile, about May 1958, I'd acquired a half-share in a motor car — not a sporty MG but a 1927 Chevrolet 'Capitol'. My old Brighton State School classmate, Bill Cross, and I bought

it together for £25, the equivalent of about $825 in current values. We took turns, week about, to drive and garage it.

Our 'Chevvy' was a lumbering great square-shaped 2-door contraption. It had high, narrow wheels and was powered by a 2.8-litre 4-cylinder motor. It had no petrol pump because the carburettor was fed by fuel from a copper can that syphoned the petrol from the fuel tank at the rear. It required no ignition key because there was a simple on-off switch beneath the dashboard. It had a 6-volt battery which was soon drained by the starting motor, in which case we'd get out the crank-handle then crank-start the engine. In doing so, we had to be sure the 3-speed gearbox was in 'neutral' otherwise the car would leap forward and run over us.

We drove it for the next year, but in that time it spent more time off the road than being driven. It had a disconcerting habit of the crown-wheel and pinion mechanism in the differential snapping off from the drive-shaft. Fortunately, spare parts were readily available from wrecking yards because Chevrolet had manufactured over a million models, and by 1958 most of them were reaching the end of their working life. On another occasion the engine blew a head gasket. To spare the cost of repairs, Bill and I did our own repairs, which meant that we spent many hours together.

Bill and I were fortunate that our Chevvy was off the road so often. It was almost lethally unroadworthy. It had mechanically operated drum brakes that couldn't instantly bring the car to a dead-halt. It used to go through light-fuses alarmingly fast — a great distraction on a busy road at night when the lights suddenly failed. The clutch, which had about 18 inches (45 centimetres) play, took considerable leg strength to operate. Its top speed was about 30 miles an hour (48 k.p.h.); and that was really an advantage because we could never exceed the speed limit.

Eventually Bill tired of shared ownership, so he and his fiancée, Megan, bought a car of their own. I can't recall if I bought Bill out of his share of the car, but I decided to get rid of it. It couldn't be sold because it was unroadworthy, so I gave it away. A friend of mine, Ian Cox, the director of the Methodist-run Tally Ho Boys' Home over in East Burwood, said he'd take it if I could deliver it so that his boys could learn about motor vehicle maintenance by working on it. Because I couldn't start it to drive it over to East Burwood, one of my Methodist Youth Fellowship pals, Graham Mitchell, a motor mechanic, towed me the 22 kilometres between home and Tally Ho. Ian Cox later told me that his Tally Ho boys, had played round with the car for a few weeks before running it into a creek at the bottom of the hill. As far as I know, that's where it might still be.

Tally Ho was a home for delinquent boys founded in 1903. It occupied 39 acres (15.8 hectares), on which it ran a farm to teach its inmates useful practical skills. The home eventually closed in 1986. After that the property was redeveloped as a business park, sporting oval complex and residential area. The creek became a series of lakes. Before that happened, I suppose my old Chevvy might have become one of the 600,000 scrapped automobiles annually recycled in Australia for their metal.

In the meantime, Margaret had received her first driving lessons in the Chevvy. Perhaps the car and the driving lessons were part of my initial attraction for her. During our lessons together, I'd be sitting nervously beside her, terrified that she might strip the gears by forgetting to use the clutch. My brother David, age 16, also taught himself drive in it. While I was away at work, he'd drive it up and down our driveway. On one famous occasion he skidded into our 2-metre-tall side gate, knocking all its pickets from their railings. He then had to nail the pickets back into position hurriedly before I arrived home from work at about 6.00 p.m. I wasn't told about this adventure until years later.

Tarli Karng

A couple of days after Christmas in 1958, David and I joined two other chaps from the church youth group, Robert Allen and Graham Muir, on a five-day hiking trip in the mountains of Gippsland east of Melbourne. Our destination was Tarli Karng. This is a crystal-clear 50-metre-deep lake extending across 14 hectares in a narrow cleft in the Great Dividing Range north of Maffra, the main town in the region. It formed about 1,500 years ago when a landslide blocked the Wellington River. No roads led to it then. The nearest road, 20 kilometres away, ran through Licola, a timber-milling settlement about 255 kilometres east of Melbourne. To get there, we caught the train to Heyfield (last station before Maffra), from where we planned to hitch rides with timber trucks to Licola.

As things turned out, a party of about 20 young men and women from a Catholic youth sodality were on the train and on their way to Tarli Karng as well. They'd organised a bus to take them the 53 kilometres from Heyfield to Licola, so they kindly asked us if we'd like to join them on the bus. We accepted their offer, keeping quiet about being from a Methodist youth group. We shared the cost of the bus hire.

At Licola the Catholics decided to camp for the night, but we Methodists began marching north-east up the steep, winding Sentinels track over the heavily-forested ranges to Tarli Karng. We must have camped somewhere along the track, maybe near a creek, before pushing on to the lake the next day. After we'd reached it, we set up our tents above the narrow beach at the western end of the lake.

As we explored the lake shore during the afternoon, we were astounded by the number of snakes we saw — mainly red-bellied blacks and tiger snakes, which prefer habitats near water. They were basking in the sun every few metres along the shingle shore. We realised we'd have to be very careful watching where we walked.

We probably spent the next day avoiding the snakes, swimming and chatting to others camped nearby. One group of three blokes were all forest officers, graduates from the Victorian School of Forestry at Creswick. They were probably in their late 20s. When David and I mentioned that our Dad was a VSF graduate, they said they knew about him because he was remembered as the best botanist ever to have passed through the school.

After a couple of days at the lake we began our long, tough two-day walk back to Licola. I can't remember the exact route we followed, but it led north to 1,634-metre-tall Mount Wellington, Victoria's eleventh highest peak, which we climbed. We then swung west to Mount Arbuckle and then Kelly's Hut, a stockman's hut in a clearing on a high plain, where we camped that night. Next day we followed the Kelly Hut track south to the Tamboritha track, which eventually led us back to Licola. We camped late that afternoon beside the Macallister River near Licola. By this stage we were just about out of food, but a kind lady from a nearby camp of artists gave us a skinned and cleaned rabbit she'd caught earlier that day. And so we dined well on rabbit stew with a garnishing of native cherries from the *Exocarpos cupressiformis* bushes behind our campsite. The next morning we hitched a ride on a timber truck, which took us all the way back to the railway station at Heyfield. We then caught the afternoon train back to Melbourne.

The Tarli Karng excursion was just what David and I both needed — an outdoors interlude before our lives took new direction. I was about to start teachers' college; and David, who'd just finished the Leaving Certificate at Hampton High School, was entering agricultural college in the new year.

At some point during this expedition I had my 21st birthday, but I can't recall if I remembered it at the time. When David and I arrived back home from Heyfield footsore and grimy, Mum and our two younger sisters welcomed us warmly and gave me birthday greetings. (Ruth and Jack had been married for two years and were living over in Blackburn;

and Dad was overseas at the Kew Herbarium in London as the Australian Botanical Liaison Officer.) Mum probably insisted that I open my birthday presents and cards there and then. The presents I remember receiving were a portable typewriter in a carrying case plus a 'Blue Stuart' tartan rug from Mum and Dad, and a set of socket spanners from David. We still use the tartan rug. The socket spanners vanished 30 years ago when someone raided my unlocked workshop one night. And the typewriter eventually went the way of all typewriters after I'd worn it out writing university essays.

Birthday celebrations over, I bathed quickly then went straight round the corner to Margaret's place. We'd been 'going together' for over two months now and I was keen to be with her again. Reassuringly, she seemed pleased to see me, too. For me it was a great joy to see her hair shining coppery-gold in the setting sun as she stood smiling at me in the porch at her front door. Within a month we'd be attending Toorak Teachers' College together. And that was to be my next great adventure.

Toorak Teachers' College

I'm not sure why Margaret and I were both sent to Toorak Teachers' College (TTC). I guess it had to do with zoning according to suburb of residence because of the five metropolitan primary teachers' colleges Toorak was the nearest. We began there together at the beginning of February 1959.

On our first day at college, we walked to the railway station together, alighted at Prahran, walked up Greville Street to Chapel Street, then turned left for a couple of blocks to Malvern Road. At Malvern Road we took the tram east to the Glenferrie Road corner, then walked downhill 240 metres to 'Stonnington', the mansion on Glenferrie Road that housed the college. At 4.00 that afternoon, we undertook the same trip in reverse. That was our routine for the rest of the year, except when we were out in schools on three-week practice teaching sessions.

Margaret entered the 'infant teacher' course to be trained to teach children from beginners through to Grade 2. At the end of her training in December 1961, she was awarded the 'TITC' — the Education Department's 'Trained Infant Teacher's Certificate'. The TITC women (never men) were the college elite because they were three-year trained. The great majority of the Toorak students took the two-year Trained Primary Teacher's Certificate (TPTC) course.

I, too, took the TPTC course, but mine was a one-year course. To be eligible for one-year training, the student had to be 21 already at the beginning of 1959. I made the cut-off by two days. I was the 'baby' among the 50 students taking the one-year program, the last time it was ever offered before being phased out. Originally, pre-World War II, one-year training for primary teachers was the norm, but in the post-war years the two-year TPTC progressively became the standard.

We one-year TPTC students were alphabetically divided by surname into two classes numbered 'Y' and 'Z'. (Because I was a 'W', I was in Z.) To the lecturers and other students we were collectively known as the 'Y-Z group'. We Y-Z students were generally older than the other students and were embarking on second careers after previous jobs in the trades, offices, shops, factories, rural industries and the armed services. Our average age was about 30, and only four of us were in our early 20s. Many were already married with children. Most of our fellow students regarded us as geriatrics. One of Margaret's cheeky classmates only ever called me 'Grandpa'. She reckoned that by dating Margaret I was 'cradle-snatching'.

Many Y-Z students had the minimal qualification for entry to TTC — a Leaving Certificate, i.e. Year 11-level, often earned the hard way at night school. In formal qualifications I was among the best educated because I'd matriculated and had passed two

university subjects. When coursework began, some Y-Z classmates struggled with the essay-writing and exams, which were at a lower level than what I was used to. I breezed through the coursework and finished the year among the top four or five Y-Z students.

When we began the first of our four three-week practice teaching rounds, I discovered that I was also a reasonably good classroom teacher. I guess my years as a Sunday School teacher had given me confidence in dealing with primary-age children. In addition, I'd always liked being with children, chatting with them and hearing their views on various matters. I found I could readily relate to them, an asset for a primary teacher. There was also something of the 'Peter Pan' in me: I'd enjoyed the world of childhood, despite its painful episodes; and I feared the onerous responsibilities of adulthood. Being with children helped me appreciate their innocence and wonderment, valuable attributes which, sadly, would be lost all too soon.

I was given 'good' practice teaching marks by the classroom teachers and the lecturers who visited us from TTC to assess our pedagogical skills. That pleased me greatly because I felt I was at last succeeding at something. In my own view I'd previously been a failure — a university dropout who hadn't made the grade as a *Sun* journalist and had then quit the Victorian Public Service precipitately to enter TTC.

Instead of going out teaching in 1960 like most of my Y-Z classmates, I returned to Melbourne University to finish my degree. That was possible because I'd done well academically during my year at TTC. The Education Department allowed its high-achieving primary teachers' college graduates to continue full-time study by undertaking a university degree or an agricultural college diploma. This was known as the 'primary extension' scheme. I was one of five Toorak students granted extensions at the end of 1959. This time round I was ready for university.

Meanwhile, the romance with Margaret had continued. Most days we travelled to college together. We were never in the same classes because we were doing different courses, but some sunny days we sat on the spacious 'Stonnington' lawns eating lunch together with Margaret's special friends — Wendy Evans, Margaret Tenney and Robin Tilley. That was the greatest intimacy she'd allow at college. She'd hold my hand as we walked to the train and tram, but as we approached TTC she'd withdraw, as if she didn't wish to be associated with me. I didn't really mind that, because I knew she had to be her own person rather than being seen as some appendage of mine. Away from TTC we continued attending Sunday School, youth group and church functions together; and Saturday night was when we went to a movie or dance and occasionally a party together. Most evenings of the week I'd visit the Vale house for an hour or so to chat with Margaret, her parents and siblings over a cup of tea. Neither of us had mentioned marriage yet, but I suppose each of us inwardly knew that almost inevitably it lay ahead for us.

Here I should mention that 'Stonnington' was a gracious setting for a blossoming romance. It was a vast, ornate, three-storey, white-painted Italianate mansion built by one of the Cobb & Co stage-coach partners in 1890. From 1901 until 1928 it had been the official residence of the Governor General of Australia when the federal parliament had been based in Melbourne. In turn it had then been a private school, a hospital and a military convalescent home. In 1957 the Education Department acquired 'Stonnington' as the new TTC campus.

The lecturers

TTC had a large lecturing staff. Only a few of them lectured the Y-Z classes, but I got to know a few of the other, mainly younger, staff members. For instance, **Peter Botsman** (1933–1997), who lectured Margaret in English, invited us to his house in Seaford with a group of other students on one occasion. Nine years later, 1968, he became my departmental

head and next-door neighbour at the University of Technology in Lae, Papua New Guinea. I probably owed my Unitech appointment to the fact that Peter remembered me from TTC. In 1972 Peter took his family from Lae to the US, where he completed a D.Ed. degree. In 1975 he returned to Australia as the Director of the Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education, which eventually (1990) became a constituent part of the Queensland University of Technology. Peter smoked far too much and didn't maintain his physical fitness. He died too young at 64 while still at Kelvin Grove. The English Teachers' Association of Queensland, of which Peter was patron during the 1980s, later instituted the 'Peter Botsman Award' for excellence in English teaching practice. Peter Botsman Awards are also made to students who've excelled in English. Earlier this year our grandson, James Willis, a Year 12 student at the Kelvin Grove State College, received one.

Another dashing young lecturer was **Dr Maurice Balson** (1928–2022), who, at age 31, had just returned from the USA with a brand-new D.Ed. degree. His subject was Educational Psychology. Maurie was a Brighton boy. Twelve years earlier at Brighton State School he'd been a student teacher attached to my Grade 4 class. As Associate Professor Balson, in 1964 he became a foundation staff member of the Education Faculty at Monash University.

One more young-lecturer-going-places was **Peter Seymour** (1932–1987), who taught Music Method. Peter went on to a high-profile career as head of elite private school music departments, at Harrow in England then at Sydney Grammar School. He was also a founder of youth orchestras and an accomplished conductor, including with the Australian Opera.

The lecturers I knew best were **Doris Baxter** and **Michael Fox ('Mick') Morris**, both near retirement age, who were mainly responsible for guiding the Y-Z students. Doris lectured us in English and Mick in Teaching Method. I greatly liked Doris, who encouraged my literary aspirations. An elderly spinster who'd immigrated from England, she was married to the job. She loved teaching and the teaching profession, and she sought to help us love it too. She took a maternal interest in all the students, especially the country girls living away from home in Education Department hostels. She eventually retired at the end of 1964.

I didn't warm so readily to Mick Morris, a pedantic old teacher who was immensely proud that he'd earned his B.A. and B.Ed. degrees while teaching. I'd occasionally doze off in his classes, which perturbed him greatly; and so my mate Bob Payne introduced me to 'No-Doz' alertness pills. I carried a pack around with me and would swallow a couple just before entering Mick's classes to stay awake. Mick, who retired in 1962, did pass on to us one sage piece of advice: *"Never lay a hand on a child in praise or blame!"* It was an adage I strictly followed thereafter. Later, as a senior secondary teacher, it kept me out of trouble when — as sometimes happens with personable male teachers — girls in my classes developed teenage 'crushes' on me. Invariably they were from homes where the father was absent; and I guess that in me they'd see the 'Daddy' they wanted but didn't have.

Perhaps the lecturer to whom I was most grateful was **John Inglis**, an older, nervous chap who taught us History of Education. Apart from the exam, the major assessment item of the year was a long essay. I chose *'The Implementation of Victoria's 1872 Free, Secular and Compulsory Education Act'* as my topic. I researched it thoroughly in the State Library, using all the available primary and secondary sources, then carefully composed it and typed it up so it could be easily read. After Mr Inglis had corrected and handed our essays back, he singled out mine for special comment. "I've given this essay 20 out of 20 because it's an excellent analysis of the introduction of the 1872 Education Act," he observed; "and it's also beautifully written." Such praise embarrassed me, especially as some of my classmates were beginning to regard me as the class *Wunderkind* that I certainly wasn't. I was nevertheless grateful to Mr Inglis for affirming my growing awareness of myself as a potential historian. Having topped his subject, I realised I must return to university to complete my degree and specialise in History.

Two special friends

Two particular Z-group classmates became my lifelong friends: Robert ('Bob') McLean Payne (1929–2020) and Ivor Salkin (1926–2018). Both were appreciably older than me, Bob nine years and Ivor twelve years older.

Bob Payne and I usually sat next to each other in class. He was originally a fitter-and-turner from Footscray, but was now living at Bonbeach, on Port Phillip Bay down beyond Mordialloc. He was married to Betty and had two little kids, Glen and Tracey. He was an ebullient, outgoing chap of unfailing good humour who made friends easily. He befriended both Margaret's parents and mine, and occasionally visited them if he was driving through Brighton. To support his family during his year at TTC he held down three part-time jobs. He spent his nights as a milkman, delivering milk around Bonbeach. He also drove a taxi at the weekends; and on Saturday afternoons he 'pencilled' for a bookmaker, writing down the bets that punters had made. He often dozed off during classes, which was why he knew about 'No-Doz' tablets. Writing assignments was a burden for him, so I used to lend him mine before submitting them for assessment. He used to joke that he'd never have graduated from TTC without my help.

After Bob graduated, he became an excellent classroom teacher and school administrator. He was promoted up through the grades to senior teacher then deputy principal at several large suburban schools. His ambition was to be principal of his own large school, but that was a goal that eluded him. Sadly, he and Betty separated in 1984, a few weeks after Bob and I had organised and run a highly successful Y-Z reunion at TTC to celebrate the 25th year of our graduation. He later married Marjorie, his second wife, and retired to Buderim on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Margaret and I visited them there 21 years ago.

In retirement, Bob drove the local school bus. He also stood unsuccessfully at the municipal council elections one year, under the catchy slogan 'No Payne, no gain!' Bob kept very fit swimming a kilometre across the bay at one of his local beaches most mornings. He was keen for me to join him on one of these swims, but after a scary experience being circled by a shark off a coral reef near Wewak in 1965, I had a phobia about swimming in the open sea. Bob dropped dead from a heart attack two years ago at the age of 91. His daughter Tracey later wrote me a kind letter to say how much he'd appreciated my friendship.

Ivor Salkin was among TTC's more exotic students. He was Jewish and from Manchester in England. Of mixed Lithuanian and Latvian descent, and blonde-haired and blue-eyed, he'd been an orthodox Jew and had been wholly immersed in Manchester's Yiddish subculture. He'd grown up in the Jewish-dominated Manchester garment industry as a machinist. After service with the RAF during World War II, he and his older brother Alf rode their bikes from Manchester to Melbourne, which they finally reached in 1949. In Melbourne they found work as machinists in the Jewish-run Flinders Lane 'rag-trade'. Both had then married *'schicksas'* (gentile women), to the great grief of their family back in Manchester. Although they probably remained 'cultural' Jews, they abandoned the practice of their faith and didn't raise their children as Jews.

Though Ivor and I were from very different backgrounds and were of different generations, we instinctively liked each other from the outset. I didn't realise that he was Jewish for several months, until we got to know each other better. One day he confided in me that he'd married in St Finbar's Catholic Church, about a mile from where I lived in Brighton, but not before the altar. That was because he wasn't a Catholic but Jewish. His wife, Pat (née Garrard), it transpired, had lived directly across the street from Margaret in Edgar Street when renting a flat while teaching at Brighton Beach State School.

Vicki, the first of Ivor and Pat's three children (the other two are Sean and Simon), was born early in our friendship. I knew all about it, because a couple of days after her birth Ivor appeared at TTC with a box of photos he'd already taken. Back in those days Ivor was a keen photographer and understood cameras and photography. (Indeed when I bought my first camera in Port Moresby in 1965, it was Ivor who advised me on its purchase and then showed me how to use it.)

After TTC, Ivor and I lost contact, but at the beginning of 1965 we found ourselves on the same plane to Papua New Guinea. We were both going there as teachers on secondment from the Victorian Education Department. When we'd reconnected, our two families saw much of each other. This continued through all the decades until Ivor's death four years ago. We visited each other in Papua New Guinea, in Canterbury in England (where they stayed with us for several weeks during the summer of 1974), in Melbourne and in Canberra, where they used to visit Vicki in the 30 years she lived here.

Ivor wasn't career ambitious. He didn't progress up the Education Department's promotional hierarchy but was content to remain a classroom teacher until his retirement. At first appearances, he mightn't have seemed greatly learned and cultured; but that's indeed what he was. While teaching, he'd earnt B.A. and M.Ed. degrees. Privately, he educated himself by reading enormously widely and spending many hours listening to classical music. He was also a keen tennis player who played several times a week at his local club well into his 80s. As well as that, he swam most days at Half Moon Bay near his home in Black Rock. During the late 1970s, the 80s and early 90s, whenever I was in Melbourne, Ivor and I would usually manage to fit in a half-day body-surfing expedition, often at his favourite surf beach, Bushranger Bay near Cape Schank on the Mornington Peninsula.

Ivor was an immensely likeable, sunny-natured, good-humoured chap. He was mild-mannered, gentle, self-effacing, modest, tolerant, and non-judgemental to a fault. He didn't flaunt his knowledge and learning because he wasn't someone who aired his opinions; but he was always keen to hear what other people had to say.

Best of all, Ivor was a story-teller with a wonderful sense of humour. His specialty was the 'Yiddish' joke, of which he had a huge fund. Often a little risqué, they showed us the world through sceptical Yiddish eyes. Here's an example of the jokes in Ivor's repertoire:

A Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest are having a discussion about religion.

The rabbi says to the priest, "Father, I understand that in your church the ordained clergy are ranked in order of their importance. If that's so, what rank are you?"

"Well, Rabbi, I'm an ordinary parish priest in charge of the church at which my Bishop has placed me," the priest replies.

"Can you be promoted any higher than that?" the rabbi asks.

"Well, yes," replies the priest; "if I serve the church very well I could be made a monsignor."

"And can you go higher than that?" asks the rabbi.

"If I demonstrate that I'm theologically learned and a church administrator of exceptional ability, I could one day be promoted to bishop, and even archbishop or, in exceptional circumstances, to cardinal," the priest explains patiently.

"Very impressive," the rabbi replies; "but can you go any higher than that?"

"Yes, it's technically possible but most unlikely ever to happen; however, I could be elected pope one day."

"That's amazing," the rabbi responds; "but can you go any higher than pope?"

By this time the priest is irritated by the rabbi's incessant questioning, so he sarcastically asks, "Do you want me to become Jesus Christ himself?"

"Well," replies the rabbi, "one of our boys made it!"

Back to university

In February 1960 I began my second stint at Melbourne University. I'd already passed two of the ten subjects I needed to graduate with a B.A. pass degree. At that stage I aspired no higher. When discussing course options with the staff of the Secondary Teachers' College, with which I was loosely affiliated, I realised that I could complete the degree within two years if I took four subjects a year. Building on English I and Geology I, I decided to major in English and Geography, with a sub-major in History. And so in 1960 I studied English I, Geography II (building on Geology I), Modern History A and German I.

I worked consistently and hard in all four subjects. I'd arrive at the university by 9.00 a.m.; and if I wasn't in lectures or tutorials I'd be in the Baillieu Library researching and writing essays and preparing for tutorial classes. About midday I'd slip into the coffee shop in the basement to eat the sandwiches Mum had prepared, and have a coffee, perhaps while chatting with friends. Then it was back upstairs to the books and assignments. I'd take a half-hour off for a bowl of fried rice and a cup of tea at 6.30 p.m., then I'd continue working in the library until it closed at 9.00 p.m. I'd walk briskly to the tram-stop on Royal Parade, catch the tram to the Flinders Street station, then take my train to North Brighton. As soon as I arrived home, I'd greet my parents and sisters, then walk around to Margaret's house to spend an hour with her and her family.

The one disconcerting aspect of resuming my B.A. course was that people I'd started university with in 1956 had now graduated and were tutors. David Johanson and Mark Richmond were both tutoring in History; my Modern History A tutor in 1960 was Katy Worcester, Mark's partner (and later wife); and my English III tutor in 1961 was Jenny Dallimore, fiancée of my pal Jim Gribble.

I passed all subjects at the end of year exams, and so I now had passes in six of the ten subjects I needed for my degree. The next year, 1961, my subjects were English III, Geography III, Modern History B and Philosophy I. I kept up the same study routine throughout the year, and again passed all subjects. I even scored an 'Hons. 2' in Modern History. In Philosophy I, which I didn't enjoy at all, I was granted a pass after taking an oral supplementary exam. The course had mainly consisted of reading and being questioned on the speculative issues arising from Plato's *Republic*, a short but tedious work which turned me off Philosophy forever. Philosophy, it seemed, was rooted in speculative abstract thought, whereas my focus was always on the verifiable facts of history.

The end of November 1961 found me a month out from my 24th birthday, with a B.A. degree, a fiancée and a teaching appointment starting in February 1962. Margaret and I had become engaged earlier in the year. She had already secured a teaching position at the Newtown Primary School in Geelong. We planned to marry during the first term vacation in May 1962; and that meant I'd have to find a teaching job within reasonable distance of hers. I applied for and was appointed to Warrambeen Primary School No. 4793, a one-room one-teacher school 33 miles north-west of Geelong on Victoria's windy western plains. We visited the school one bleak Saturday afternoon during September soon after I'd read in the *Education Gazette* that I'd been assigned there. Even though it was within an hour's drive from Geelong, it seemed remote and isolated.

Meanwhile, I'd loved my two years back at university. Except for Philosophy, I'd greatly enjoyed all the courses I'd taken. I'd established friendships with a wide circle of

fellow students, mainly other Education Department studentship holders. I found the course content stimulating, and I'd proved to myself that I had scholastic ability. I enjoyed the tutorial discussions and made sure I contributed to them.

Among my most rewarding experiences at the end of 1961 was the letter I received from Bill Breen, my Modern History tutor. Bill, who was my age and later became a Professor of History at Latrobe University, congratulated me on my 'Hons. 2'. He then invited me to join the M.A. preliminary course in History the next year. He said I had the makings of an historian and was someone who'd benefit from postgraduate studies in History. He predicted that I'd eventually write a good M.A. thesis. I wrote back to say I'd love to be able to accept his offer, but I was obliged to start my teaching career out in a rural school and was getting married. I doubted I could do all that while beginning postgraduate studies.

Several tasks had to be completed before Christmas 1961. First there was Margaret's graduation ball in the Malvern Town Hall. It was a gala occasion. I think I wore 'penguin gear' and I made sure I presented Margaret with a special corsage prepared by the florist in Bay Street; and we probably travelled there and back by taxi. At the ball I met several of my former TTC lecturers. Doris Baxter was pleased I'd finished a B.A. degree with an English major; Vince di Nuzzo, who'd taught me Art & Craft, asked if I was now an 'intellectual'.

Second, a couple of days later we had to drive to Canberra in my new cherry-red Mini-Minor so I could be Best Man at my mate Tony Irvine's wedding. To look presentable, I'd even had a highly fashionable charcoal-grey three-button suit made by an Elizabeth Street tailor. This would match the wedding suit that Tony would wear. We both wore the same suits six months later, when he came down from Canberra to be Best Man at my wedding.

When Margaret and I reached Canberra on the Friday evening after an exhausting 13-hour drive, I had to attend a rehearsal at the church, St John's Anglican in Reid. This was to ensure we'd all know what to do on the morrow. Margaret was staying with her great-aunt and uncle, Alison and Ted Callender, a few blocks from the church, and I'd already taken her there. I was staying with Tony in his rental house. I was faint with weariness, so as soon as the rehearsal was over, I drove back there and collapsed into bed.

I can't remember much about the wedding because it happened in a haze of my fatigue, but it all went off very nicely. The reception was in the new Canberra Rex Hotel on Northbourne Avenue. Several of Tony's mates from the Ainslie Football Club complimented me on my Best Man's speech afterwards, so I guess I hadn't disgraced myself. After we'd all farewelled Tony and Angela, his bride, who were flying off to a honeymoon on an island in the Great Barrier Reef, Margaret and I went back to Aunt Alison's and Uncle Ted's. By prior arrangement, that's where I'd now be staying as well.

Aunt Alison and Uncle Ted were enormously kind to us, though we'd never met them before. (Decades later, I attended both their funerals in Canberra.) We stayed on in Braddon for a couple of days, during which Uncle Ted kindly drove us round town and showed us all the sights. The main thing I remember is being driven across a dusty paddock, now beneath Lake Burley Griffin, to see Parliament House. At that stage we had no idea we'd eventually be spending more than half our lives in Canberra.

We then had a long drive back to Melbourne to face the end-of-year festivities. These included the Sunday School concert (my last), the annual presentation of Handel's *Messiah* by the church choir (in which I sang bass), and the farewell of our departing Minister, the Rev. Reg McConochie. (I was among the speech makers at this last event.) As soon as Christmas had been and gone, I had to spend a week at the Methodist Boys' Camp at Ocean Grove, where I was a leader. The boys' camp was followed by a girls' camp at which Margaret and her best friend, Wendy Evans, were leaders.

After all these activities were over, we had to start thinking seriously about the teaching careers we'd begin several weeks later. But that's a story I'll tell in the next chapter.

I'll conclude this section by mentioning that one of my hobbies was experimental brewing. I regularly brewed up batches of volatile ginger beer, but I also experimented with what I hoped would become cherry wine. I was pleased with the batch of fizzy fermented cherry juice I'd concocted, but it caused one embarrassing incident. This occurred at the end of Rev. McConochie's farewell evening. People were milling round in the Sunday School hall to shake his hand and wish him well. I was among them, standing behind him to his side as I waited my turn to step up to speak with him. In my left hand in a brown paper bag was a bottle of my fermented cherry juice. Immediately after the farewell I was going round to Margaret's place to show it to Bill Vale, my father-in-law-to-be. He was a microbiologist and was interested in fermentation processes; and so I'd brought the bottle along with me unobtrusively. To my horror, it suddenly popped its cork and started fizzing out. A jet of sticky spray hit the back of Reg's long black preaching robe before I could clamp my right hand over the bottle mouth. The only person who saw what happened was a little five-year old girl, Robin Berriman, who stood gaping at what she'd just seen. After exchanging brief looks of amazement with her, I hastily withdrew.

Decades later I met Robin again when I was visiting Mum and Dad. Robin was serving in a shop in Church Street, Middle Brighton, where I'd gone to buy something. She had no idea who I was, so I explained that I used to know her parents at the church. I then asked if she could remember the time when she was little and saw the Minister being sprayed from a bottle. She had no recollection at all, so I was the only person who remembered this one sequel of my cherry wine making experiment. I've often wondered what Reg McConochie made of it when he disrobed later and found the sticky fluid sprayed up and down his gown.

Church involvements

Despite my brewing escapades, I was almost wholly committed to the church. Through all the three years I've just described, I was heavily involved in the life of the Male Street Methodist Church, and of the wider Methodist Church beyond.

I had entered the life of the church reluctantly. I didn't voluntarily choose to be a Sunday School teacher, then the Sunday School superintendent, the leader of the boys' club and youth group, a trainee lay preacher, and a leader at the annual Methodist boys' summer camps at Ocean Grove, on the Bellarine Peninsular south-east of Geelong.

I did all those things because it was expected of me, not because I wanted to. My parents and the church leaders pressured me into accepting such duties. To have refused would have meant rejecting them and their values. Having succumbed, I then worked hard at performing well so as not to disappoint those who'd had faith in my modest abilities.

I now understand that we don't always seek the duties and roles assigned to us. Sometimes they're thrust upon us. When they are, we accept them graciously and rise to the challenge of meeting them and fulfilling the obligations we've accepted. That's simply the way of things, and mature, responsible citizens will accept that reality.

I've often wondered what I might have done if I hadn't allowed myself to be become so immersed in the life of the church. Perhaps I'd have drifted off into the aimless world of agnosticism, becoming just another droplet in the vast and growing ocean of the unchurched. I couldn't do that, however, because I had religious faith. I've always believed in God, and I accepted the belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God — God incarnate, God made flesh, the one man into which God poured Gosdself so that wayward, fallible humanity might better understand God's wishes for humankind. If you believe that, you also believe the corollary, which is that the Christian is called to a life of service. Jesus spoke about this when he

predicted his crucifixion at the end of his famous Last Supper. This final meal is described in chapter 13 of the Gospel of John. Jesus tells his disciples:

> *"Where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

To be a latter-day disciple, I had to be involved in the mission of the church, living out Christ's 'new commandment'. I couldn't refuse the demands being made of me because that would have meant rejecting the faith that sustained me. One cannot be a true Christian without such involvement. The Christian walks the difficult pilgrim path through life, losing the way sometimes, but eventually finding again the track towards reconciliation with Godself. And along the way the Christian must support those who need help. Providing a framework for that support is one of the church's primary tasks.

In this connection, I've always appreciated John Bunyan's allegorical novel, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), which is truly one of the great classics of English literature. I had to read it as one of the set texts for English III in 1961; and I've read it again a couple of times since, most recently in 2020. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a great metaphor for the Christian life. As the hero, Christian, and his companions Faithful and Hopeful struggle on towards the Celestial City ('that which is to come'), they support each other. They give practical expression to the 'new commandment' in John 13:33–35.

Fortunately, to help me in my multiple responsibilities at the church I had the enthusiastic support of a group of other young people. Chief among them were **Margaret**, **Wendy Evans**, and **Charlie Norman**, who'd been one of David's closest friends before he left home in early 1959 to spend three years at Longerenong Agricultural College. Looking back on all our involvements, I realise what a vibrant youth community the church hosted. The church was fortunate to have had such a dedicated team of youngsters who were willing to work hard making a success of its various ministries. I recall that in my last year at the church there wasn't a single evening when I wasn't at the church running or assisting in some activity.

Sadly, after we'd all departed to pursue careers and lives elsewhere, the effort dwindled and the ageing congregation shrank. The church eventually closed in 1979 after a congregational life of over 130 years. During the 1980s it was sold and is now a private home. The last time it exchanged hands, it fetched about $2.5 million.

Writ large, that has been the story of mainstream Protestantism in Australia, and probably most other Western nations as well. The once great Methodist Church of Australia is no more. In 1977 it was subsumed within a new church, the Uniting Church in Australia, by amalgamating with most of the Congregational churches and about three-quarters of the Presbyterian churches. But now the Uniting Church itself is in continual and perhaps even terminal decline. Its congregations are ageing and shrinking fast. As I've attended various Uniting Churches in my travels, I've been struck by the dearth of young people. Few adherents are younger than about 60; and those who remain are, like me, now too old and infirm to be actively involved in the Church's ministries.

For people who are hostile to the church, the decline of Protestant Christianity is no great loss to civilization. Indeed they see it as a worthwhile development because they think it frees humanity from the lingering vestiges of mediaeval superstition. Those of us who are grateful for having grown up in devout Protestant families will see things differently, however. We can appreciate the great contribution that Protestantism made to the development of Australia, and the 'moral compass' it gave us personally. We also appreciate how the ebbing tide of religious faith has left many people lost and directionless. Sociologists have a word for this — 'anomie'. Anomie denotes the breakdown of community moral values

and the loss of commonly accepted ethical standards. Anomie leads to dysfunctional personal behaviour and dysfunctional relationships within families, organisations and workplaces.

Everywhere I look in Australia nowadays I see anomie. I see it especially in remote Aboriginal communities where the horrific rates of domestic violence, murdered women and child sexual abuse are a national disgrace. I see it in an alarming new phenomenon, where innocent road-users are killed on divided highways because other drivers who've been driving on the wrong side of the road have run into them. The road-rule breakers have been escaping police pursuits and have crossed to the wrong side of the road because they know the police will call off the chase. Anomie is one reason for the gang wars in Sydney and Melbourne, where drive-by shootings and home invasions are common-place. It's obvious in the proliferation of criminal bikie gangs. We see it in the multiplicity of child pornography websites and the existence of the 'deep web'; and of course it's always present in the burgeoning sex trade and in the lucrative gambling industry, both of which are perennial and inevitable sources of corruption.

Am I just an old chap looking back on his youth through rose-tinted spectacles? Perhaps; but as I reflect on life in the late 1950s and early 60s, I realise that the enormous social change that has overtaken Australia over the past six decades hasn't always been for the best.

7. WARRAMBEEN

Warrambeen primary school, State School No. 4793, opened in February 1957 to serve the families on both sides of the Warrambine Creek. Most of the families were recent arrivals who had taken up new farms made available to World War II veterans through the Soldier Settler scheme. This particular settlement, about 60 farms west of Geelong between Shelford and Rokewood, opened in 1955 on land the Soldier Settler Commission had acquired from four large pastoral estates of the district — 'Golf Hill' near Shelford, 'Wurrook' near Rokewood, and 'Warrambeen' and 'Barunah Plains' in between. Other families were from the two nearest estates, 'Warrambeen' and 'Gumley'.

The area, loosely known as the Western Plains and now within the Golden Plains Shire, comprises mainly flat and largely treeless land in the roughly equilateral triangle between Geelong, Ballarat and Colac. The soils are often thin and rocky, the remnant of lava flows from the many volcanic cones of the region, some of which were still active as recently as 5,000 years ago.

Few watercourses cross the plains. In the east, the Leigh River flows through Shelford; Illabarook Creek runs past Rokewood six kilometres to the west; and midway between them is the Warrambine Creek and a couple of other minor streams. The latter include Kuruc-a-Ruc, an intermittent brook meandering through Rokewood.

The first school

The school, originally known as 'Wurrook South', opened on Tuesday 5 February 1957. The teacher was Brian McRae. Brian, whom I met when he revisited the district about six years later, had previously been the teacher at Toolern Vale, midway between Sunbury and Melton on Melbourne's north-western rural fringe.

In establishing the school, the Victorian Education Department had bowed to political pressure. The pressure came from none other than the State Premier of the day, Sir Henry Bolte, who lived at 'Bamgamie', a pastoral estate about 15 kilometres east of Warrambeen. Sir Henry was accordingly a resident of the district. Always keen to promote development projects within his electorate, he had received a deputation of Warrambeen parents who had appealed to him for help in founding a local school. He 'leaned' gently on his Minister for Education; and then the school opened soon afterwards.

The school was situated on the northern side of the Shelford-Rokewood Road, adjacent to the Leigh Shire hall and only 100 metres east of the bridge across Warrambine Creek. In September 1957 it was renamed Warrambeen, taking the name of the adjacent estate.

During its first two years, the school occupied an annexe of the shire hall; but in 1959 it moved next door into a purpose-built transportable school building. This occupied a site of about two-thirds of an acre (0.268 hectares) excised from the shire hall property. Previously the new building had been the school at Duverny, 25 kilometres to the southwest near Cressy, which had closed.

In its first year, the school had 13 pupils from seven families, all but two of whom were on soldier settler farms. In the 14½ years the school was open, 1957–1971, another 49 pupils were enrolled, so that a total of 62 pupils attended Warrambeen. Some stayed for the full seven years of primary education, others for a year or two and a few for only several months. Peak enrolments were 21 pupils in 1963 and 1964. The pupils were all 'baby boomers' and once they'd all grown up and left home there were no school-age children left to keep the school open. When enrolments had dropped below the cut-off level of six by Easter 1971, the Education Department closed the school.

Brian McRae struggled manfully to establish his little school. The shire hall annexe was little more than an ill-lit rough timber hut, into which desks and a blackboard had been crammed. He soon ran into opposition from a couple of the soldier settler families, who didn't believe he was teaching their children 'properly'. On one notorious occasion, two of the fathers broke into the school after hours to 'borrow' several of the pupils' exercise books from their desks. They then took the books to the teacher at Rokewood to see what he thought about the pupils' progress. The Rokewood teacher had the good sense to send them packing. He told them what they'd done was despicable, and he refused to betray a colleague by passing judgement on him. Not surprisingly, Brian quit as soon as he could to transfer to a suburban school in Melbourne.

The second school

The transportable classroom relocated from Duverny was possibly of a standard Education Department design, though I've never seen another like it. Its floor area was about seven metres long by six wide. It stood about four metres high and was covered by a shallow box-gable roof. Entry was by a single door that led into a small porch at the south-eastern corner. This contained a wash-basin, hat racks and a large steel cabinet for school records. The doorway faced the gravel road leading from the main Shelford-Rokewood road into the 'Warrambeen' estate.

Two banks of windows extending halfway along both the eastern and western sides provided ample light. The water supply was a 1000-gallon (4546-litre) corrugated iron rainwater tank on a 1.5-metre-high tank stand at the side of the porch. A system of guttering, conduit piping and filters efficiently channelled the rainwater from the roofing into the tank. The water was always cool and refreshing to drink, even in the hottest of summers. I encouraged the pupils to wash their hands and faces often, and of course always after visiting the pit toilets 25 metres away on the northern side of the playground. Despite their liberal ablutions, the tank remained nearly full and we never faced water shortages.

In the north-eastern corner of the schoolroom was a 'Warmray' slow-combustion wood-burning heater, the flue of which extended through the roof. The fuel came from a pile of logs which the school council chairman, 'Chick' Fowler, obligingly delivered and cut into one-foot lengths with a circular saw in my first months at the school. The supply lasted all three years I was at Warrambeen. The 'Warmray' was highly efficient. Several logs were sufficient to keep the building warm throughout the coldest of winter days. On cold, wet winter days, the pupils would remain inside for the lunch and recess breaks, playing board games and enjoying the sandwiches they'd toasted on the top of the 'Warmray'.

The blackboard extended the length of the eastern wall; and along the western wall was a bank of lockers with coat-hooks on which the pupils hung their raincoats and schoolbags. Beneath the blackboard were storage cupboards containing mainly art-and-craft supplies.

The desks varied in size from 'large' for the Grade 5 & 6 pupils through 'medium' for Grades 3 & 4 to 'small' for Grades 1 & 2. The 'Littlies' — beginners in the Kindergarten class — sat at a table near the front on the eastern side. The desks were arranged in rows, with Grades 5 & 6 nearest the western wall, along which ran the library shelves; Grades 1 & 2 sat nearest the eastern wall, and Grades 3 & 4 in the middle between the other two rows. The teacher's own desk and a worktable were against the eastern wall.

Though the school occupied just this one room, its design must have been carefully planned to provide a maximal learning area. I guess a Public Works Department architect had worked closely with an experienced rural schoolteacher to devise a user-friendly design. Duverny School No. 3970 had been open from as early as 1921; but the building relocated to Warrambeen was much younger than that. My guess is that it dated from 1944 and had been

built to replace an earlier building which had possibly been destroyed in the bush fires that swept through the Corangamite region that year. In August 1944 the Victorian government called for tenders for the construction of a new timber building for the Duverny school; and that would have been the building which ended up at Warrambeen.

Over the life of the school, successive teachers toiled to beautify it. We planted shrubs and trees, developed lawns, and used painted rocks to mark out the borders of a curved driveway from the double gate on the main road. We had playground equipment — a slide and monkey bars — installed, and I constructed a tool-shed to house the motor-mower and garden tools. The Mothers' Club raised money to buy brightly-coloured fabric for curtains, which they made and I installed. They found the funds for library books and shelving, a spirit duplicator, a slide projector and display boards. By the time I moved on at the end of 1964, Warrambeen was as pretty a little bush school as any; and the school community — parents, pupils and teacher — felt proud of it and of having developed something worthwhile together.

After Warrambeen closed in 1971, the building remained on the site for another four or five years, but eventually, mid-1970s, it was moved elsewhere. I have no idea where it ended up. The only remaining vestige of the school is the concrete pad I had laid down in the space between the front door and the side gate as an assembly area so that my pupils wouldn't have to stand in the mud on wet days. It also doubled as a volleyball and hand-tennis court. A quick search in Google Maps just now shows me that the wire fence with concrete fenceposts which once enclosed the schoolground has now gone, but the trees that I planted have all reached maturity. So, too, has the stand of eucalypt trees I had planted under the Education Department's school plantation scheme. Some 25 metres across, this runs for 500 metres along the northern side of the main road between the side-road into Warrambeen and Lonies Road to the east. It now forms a sturdy wind-break for a paddock of the 'Warrambeen' estate. Almost 60 years after I departed Warrambeen, the trees for me are a proud personal memorial to my time at the school.

The teachers

Most of the teachers were young single chaps who were in their early twenties and usually in their first or second year out from teachers' college. Ten 'long-term' teachers were posted to the school during the years it was open. They remained at the school for periods varying between one term and three years. In addition, several relief teachers worked there for shorter periods.

The teachers and their years at the school were: Brian McRae (1957), Jim Payne (1958), Colin Kennedy (1959), Bernie Crow (1960–1961), Ian Willis (1962–1964), Chris O'Rourke (1965), Ross Crilley (1966–1967), and Harold Cover (1968–1971), who remained the longest and closed the school. In addition to these eight, Brian Fisher and Noel Tonkin each spent about a term at the school in the late 1950s. With such continual comings and goings of teachers, some of the parents and children gave up trying to remember their names and simply referred to them as 'The Teacher'.

Only two of the teachers were married. The first was Jim Payne, who remained there a year and lived in a worker's cottage on the 'Warrambeen' estate. I was the second. During our first year at Warrambeen, Margaret and I lived in the 'Half-Way House', a near-derelict former Cobb & Co coaching inn diagonally opposite the school on the far bank of Warrambine Creek. During my second and third years we lived in a rented cottage in Shelford, 12.5 kilometres south-east of Warrambeen. I was the teacher who remained at the school the second longest.

The single teachers customarily boarded with the school's families. An informal rotation system was in place. Each family agreed to host the teacher for a year. Another soldier settler couple, Howard and Grace Ross, whose children attended the Shelford school, also hosted several Warrambeen teachers. Although I didn't board with them, Howard and Grace became special friends of ours. We remained in contact with them until they died, Howard in 2007 and Grace in 2013; we attended both of their funerals in Horsham in Victoria's Wimmera District.

Life at Warrambeen must have been lonely for the single teachers. Few people of their own age lived anywhere near the school; they spent most of their time with children; and apart from the pub in Rokewood and the sporting clubs there and in Shelford, the district had few social amenities. Most were city boys from Melbourne, often with girlfriends there. They went home as frequently as possible to spend their weekends in the city. The Warrambeen parents used to joke that some teachers were so keen to get away they'd beat the kids out the gate after school closed at 3.30 p.m.

The joke was intended as a caution to the teacher hearing it. The parents noted how much time the teachers spent at the school after hours and at weekends. They disapproved of those who consistently left early or had too many weekends away. One reason they supported me so loyally was that they knew I toiled long and hard at the school. Driving past at night, they realised that the lights still on at 6.30 p.m. and my car outside the gate meant I was still preparing the next day's lessons; and at weekends they'd see me mowing lawns, watering the shrubs and undertaking outside maintenance jobs. They appreciated my diligence and knew that the long hours I spent at the school ultimately meant a better education for their children.

Preparation for rural school teaching

Their time at teachers' college would have prepared the Warrambeen teachers for rural school teaching. Some training schools where teachers' college students did their practice teaching maintained a 'rural school' in one of the classrooms. This was a multi-grade class structured as a one-teacher school and run by a teacher with substantial rural school experience. He (and they were all men) conducted the class as a model one-teacher school, demonstrating to the college students how to manage a rural school. Most male college students spent one three-week practice teaching round in such classes. My own rural school practice was at Valkstone Primary School in East Bentleigh, where my supervising teacher was Ron Peacock, a chap in my MHS Old Boys hockey team.

The Education Department probably had difficulty in staffing its many hundreds of often remote one-teacher schools. Few college graduates wished to be sent to 'the bush', where they'd be cut off from family, friends and their normal social, cultural and sporting activities. And even fewer went voluntarily to the most isolated schools, which were generally regarded as 'punishment' postings.

The department dealt with this problem, first, by its bonding system. College graduates who'd trained on studentships — the huge majority — were obliged to serve wherever the department chose to send them. The bond was for three years. The only exception was for female teachers who married and became pregnant, in which case the bond was reduced to one year. Anyone who quit the department's employment before the bond expired had to repay the funds disbursed to them through their studentships. Unless young, single male graduates could secure a position in an urban school, most were 'sent bush', and had little say where that was.

The department's other way of persuading college graduates to 'go bush' was to propagandise heavily for the rural schools. The teachers' colleges extolled the benefits of rural school teaching. We exited teachers' college believing that there was nothing finer in

life, nor as noble and fulfilling, as being the teacher of a little one-room one-teacher school amidst the Mallee sandhills out west of Manangatang or somewhere in the trackless, gloomy mountain ash forests of East Gippsland. And so we younger unmarried chaps sallied forth willingly to remote and isolated parts of the state like Wulgulmerang, Bendoc, Gerang Gerung and Patchewollock.

Not all of us believed the propaganda, however. I realised this years later when I ran into one of my 'Y-Z' classmates from Toorak Teachers' College, Rod Walke. Rod was a serving Army officer whose teacher training was sponsored by the Army Education Corps. When he asked where I'd been teaching, I explained that I'd applied for and been appointed to Warrambeen, a one-teacher school out on the windy Western Plains beyond Geelong. "Don't tell me you bought that crock of old crap about the joys of the rural school!" he exclaimed.

I wasn't the only one who'd succumbed to the propaganda. One of my married 'Y-Z' classmates, Cliff Green (1934–2020), who was three years older than me, applied for and was appointed to Whitlands Primary School No. 4536. Whitlands was very, very remote — hardly more than a clearing straddling the upper King River amidst the steep, thickly forested mountains at the northern end of the Alpine National Park. The village, which might have had a population of about 35, is 45 kilometres south-east of Benalla and the same distance north-east of Mansfield; but all the roads into Whitlands were tortuous mountain tracks, so getting there from either of these towns must have taken well over an hour's hazardous drive. One reason Cliff went there was that, being married, he wanted a school with teacher's residence attached. Whitlands was one of the few one-teacher schools with its own teacher accommodation.

We 'Y-Z' students didn't know it, but Cliff had a gift for writing. Before entering teachers' college he'd been a printer, but as a boy he'd had stories published in *Junior Age*, the children's section of the *Age* newspaper. His talent emerged during his time at Whitlands, when he began publishing short stories in the *School Paper*. His writing rose to a higher level, to the extent that he eventually quit teaching to become a full-time scriptwriter for film and television. As such, he became by far the most famous and distinguished of his 'Y-Z' classmates. His first success was the television drama series *Marion*, which, first screened by the ABC in 1974, drew on his experience of bush school teaching. (The central character, Marion Richards, is a young female teacher in a Victorian bush school during World War II. She falls in love with an Italian prisoner-of-war.) The next year Cliff achieved fame and fortune for writing the screenplay of Peter Wier's much acclaimed movie, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Cliff's eminent screenwriting career continued into the 1990s. Other notable achievements were the ABCTV drama series *Power Without Glory* (1976), *I Can Jump Puddles* (1981) and *Boy Soldiers* (1990). Eventually, 2009, Cliff was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for services to the film and television industries.

First view of Warrambeen

Most teachers were probably taken aback by what they found at Warrambeen, even if it wasn't as remote or isolated as Whitlands. After a life in the city, the school seemed far from the comforts of home. Especially in earlier years, before the surrounding trees and shrubs grew, the school stood forlorn on its largely treeless plain above the Warrambine Creek.

At this point I should explain that the school and the adjacent pastoral estate were called 'Warrambeen' (rhyming with 'Warren Bean'), while the creek was 'Warrambine' (rhyming with 'columbine'). Both were derived from the same Aboriginal word meaning 'birds fly home to roost'. That was the explanation given me by Terry Bingley, the proprietor of the 'Warrambeen' estate, which dated back to 1862. The Bingleys acquired 'Warrambeen' in

1902. Back in the mid-nineteenth century, the only trees in the vicinity were along the creek near the station homestead. Every evening the birds from the plains would fly there to roost in the trees.

My own first view of the school came as a shock. This was during a preliminary visit I made about late August 1961. I was still at university but had begun applying for school appointments in the Barwon Region, the area around Geelong. That was because Margaret had already been appointed to the Newtown Primary School in Geelong. We planned to marry during the first term vacation in May 1962, so I, too, had to find an appointment within the Barwon Region. I accordingly applied for all the Barwon Region Class IV (base-grade classroom teacher) positions advertised in the *Education Gazette*.

When a subsequent *Gazette* announced that I'd been appointed to School 4793, Warrambeen, I was relieved. I was also perplexed because I couldn't find where the school was. I rang Education Department headquarters to inquire but received little help. No one there seemed to have a directory of school addresses. Scouring Royal Automobile Club of Victoria maps of the Geelong area, I eventually found Warrambine Creek. Further investigation revealed that Warrambeen was an alternative spelling and that the school was situated on the Shelford-Rokewood Road near the creek about 53 kilometres west of Geelong.

Margaret's father loaned us his car so we could visit the school the next Saturday. It was a grey, bleak late winter's day. After driving along seemingly endless roads across flat, windy and largely treeless lava flow plains, we eventually saw the school. The only other nearby structure was the adjacent shire hall hidden behind a row of cypresses. The school stood out amidst the wide expanse of its playground, silhouetted against the dark cypress hedge forming the eastern boundary of the shire hall. Sombreness was the prevailing impression.

After briefly looking round the schoolground, we went off to introduce ourselves to the locals. We knocked on several doors up and down the main road, but no one was home. We later discovered that it was grand-final day for the Western Plains Football League, and so most of the district's residents were away watching the big match. I returned early in January 1962 to visit the Moloney family, whose children were at the school. That was because I knew Colin Kennedy, the third Warrambeen teacher, who'd boarded with the Moloneys. Colin advised me that getting to know Owen and Elvie Moloney first would be a good way of making my entrée into the Warrambeen community.

The Moloneys, who were greatly welcoming and hospitable and remained our friends, told me that I should contact the School Committee chairman, Chick Fowler, who had the school keys. I then visited Chick, who passed over the keys. Chick also explained that I couldn't board with the family whose turn it was to host me. That was because the wife was heavily pregnant and didn't wish to look after the teacher. He said he was arranging for me to live at the Rokewood hotel. A teetotalling Methodist at that stage, I had no wish to live in a pub, so I made a private arrangement with Annie and Harry Earl, owners of the 'Half-Way House', for me to stay there. Annie and Harry lived in Geelong but came to Warrambeen about once a week to tend their farm, which surrounded the 'Half-Way House'. Sometimes they camped in the house overnight, as during shearing, but otherwise it was empty. For weekly rent of £1 ($2 — $30 in current values), they agreed that I could batch there and live there with Margaret after we'd married.

We made several other visits to the school and 'Half-Way House' over the next few weeks. I moved in a couple of days before the start of the new school year on Tuesday 6 February 1962.

In the meantime, Margaret and I had also taken our parents to see the school and our accommodation. They didn't say much but were plainly shocked by the primitive living and

working conditions. No toilet or bathroom at the 'Half-Way House'; no electric power laid on; water from a tank in the front yard; only an ancient wood-fire stove to cook on; and a barely-functioning kerosene-powered refrigerator. At the school was a similar dearth. No electricity; and no telephone. (The electricity was connected in my last year at the school, and the phone the year after I left.) The schoolroom was bare and unadorned. The few surviving shrubs planted by previous teachers were little above knee-high. The district was in the grip of an extended drought, so the surrounding grass was dead and the soil bare. The soil, a heavy black 'Bay of Biscay'-type 'expansion-and-contraction' volcanic loam, was hard-baked, deeply cracked and infested with crickets. The mice were almost in plague proportions. The traps I nightly laid at the 'Half-Way House' and at the school were always full the next morning.

No doubt our parents worried about what we were letting ourselves in for; but Margaret and I were not greatly perturbed. As far as we were concerned, we were beginning a great adventure and keen to make the most of the opportunities that Warrambeen presented.

The 'Half-Way House'

The 'Half-Way House' was so named because, as mentioned, it began its life as a Cobb & Co coaching inn. It was half-way on the run between Geelong in the south-east and Skipton, west of Ballarat and 107 kilometres north-west of Geelong. Stagecoaches running between the two towns changed horses and overnighted at the 'Half-Way'. The coaching stables, a tumbledown bluestone basalt building being used as a barn, still stood at the southern end of the house.

The house stood above the western bank of Warrambine Creek at the junction of the main road and the Wingeel Road. The latter was a gravel road running south from the Warambine Creek bridge through the 'Barunah Plains' section of the soldier settlement, to Mount Hesse and Wingeel (neither a town but only an area of settlement), and eventually to Ombersley, a small town on the Winchelsea-Cressy Road about 30 kilometres south of Warrambeen. From there, various other roads continued south for another 40 kilometres through the Otway Ranges to the coast at Lorne. During our time at Warrambeen, Margaret and I used this route on various excursions to explore the Otways and the Great Ocean Road between Lorne and Port Campbell.

The house was a low-slung 'colonial'-style weatherboard dwelling with verandas on two sides. It was in an advanced state of dilapidation, with loose boards that rattled in the wind. During high gales, which often blew across the windy Western Plains, we could feel the house rise from its bearers before settling again. We used to wonder if the next gust might dump the whole building into the creek.

We only ever used two rooms — the kitchen-living room and one of the bedrooms. On their occasional overnight visits, Annie and Harry Earl used one of the other bedrooms. Soon after we moved in, Harry kindly decided to partition off one end of the side veranda where there was a kerosene-heated copper for washing clothes. This was to give us a laundry-bathroom. The bath from the house was up the back paddock serving as a water-trough for the sheep, so he retrieved that, cleaned it out and set it in place beside the copper.

Harry obligingly cobbled together a series of pipes and hoses from a rainwater tank out the back to a tap that he fitted over the bath. There was then a grand turning-on ceremony. Harry turned the tap, and after a few gurgles, a tiny trickle of water dribbled into the bath. The flow was so slight that we could only use the water for brushing our teeth. Harry said he'd have to work on the water-supply problem further. Meanwhile, we carried buckets of water from the tank in the front yard, heated it in the kerosene-fuelled copper then transferred it into the bath. This was such a messy, time-consuming procedure that we only ever used the

bath a few times. Instead we did our ablutions in a baby's bath on the floor in front of the stove in the kitchen, where we kept kettles on the boil for hot water. I later inspected Harry's pipeline from the tank to the bath, only to discover that several long-dead and bloated possums were floating in the tank. After that, we never again turned Harry's tap on.

The 'Half-Way House' had a tumbledown pan-toilet about 20 metres up the back yard, but the pan was brim-full and such a noisome, disgusting sight that we couldn't bring ourselves to use it. I wasn't going to empty someone else's overflowing toilet pan; further, the mummified corpses of dead rats littered the floor and seat-bench. We overcame our toilet problem by using chamber-pots, several of which we bought. One task every morning before heading off to school was to empty the chamber-pots into a hole I dug in the back garden. When we occasionally had overnight visitors, the last duty at night was to drive them the 300 metres up the road to the school so they could use the toilets there. Same procedure first thing next morning before breakfast.

Our winter in the 'Half-Way House' was bitterly cold. The house was so drafty that the icy winds direct from Antarctica seemed to blow through it unimpeded. After dinner at about 7.00 p.m., we huddled together on chairs in front of the woodfire stove for a couple of hours trying to keep warm as we undertook our lesson preparation and wrote up our daily work-programs. Margaret used to sit with the oven door open and her feet inside the oven.

The warmest fuel we could find comprised broken wax phonograph cylinders. In one of the spare rooms Annie and Harry kept an ancient 1880s-era 'Edison' phonograph, with a large, curved trumpet-shaped amplifier attached. Alongside the phonograph were half a dozen large boxes of the black wax cylinders on which the music was recorded. We'd occasionally entertain our guests by winding up the phonograph and playing them the music. Nowadays such a machine, its wax cylinders and associated paraphernalia would fetch up to $1000 on e-Bay; but for us the phonograph's main benefit was the fuel afforded by its broken wax cylinders. About half the cylinders in the boxes were broken and utterly useless, so we began using them as fire-lighters and kindling for the stove. They burnt brightly and hot for about ten minutes, so we burnt them often. We never told Annie and Harry that that's what we were doing. They never used the phonograph and probably never realised that its stock of broken wax cylinders was being steadily depleted.

Various friends visited us for the weekend while we lived in the 'Half-Way House'. The first were Bill and Megan Cross, who came several months after we'd married. They were appalled. When we showed them to the spare bedroom after they'd arrived, they decided they'd spend the night in their car in the front yard instead. (They spent another weekend with us the next year, after we'd moved into a cottage in Shelford. On that visit they slept in our spare room without demur.) Other visitors were Bob and Betty Payne, who were living in Hamilton at the time. They were happy to sleep in the spare bedroom, but after they'd taken their suitcase there, Betty screamed, "There's a snake in the fireplace!". I investigated. A long reptilian tail was certainly protruding from the grating, but it belonged to a large blue-tongued lizard, which was easily removed and let loose in the garden.

We lived in the 'Half-Way House' for only seven months, between May and December 1962. (I'd batched there alone February–May.) In the October Margaret's first pregnancy had been confirmed. Our friends Howard Ross and Owen Moloney firmly told us that we couldn't bring a baby into such a house, so they helped us find another. Howard located a neat, clean, well-appointed, well-maintained and vacant worker's cottage at 35 Tolson Street in Shelford, near the end of the road and above the west bank of the Leigh River. We rented it from a chap called Jack Carpenter, who lived a couple of hundred metres away in the street behind ours. We moved in that December and lived there very happily for the next two years, until we quit Victoria for our next great adventure, in Papua New Guinea. Rosemary was

born in June 1963, midway through our first year in the house, and so she spent the first 18 months of her life living in our Shelford cottage.

The 'Half-Way House' survived into the late 1980s, by which time it must have been over 120 years old. Harry and Annie Earl had died, Harry in 1980 at age 79 and Annie in 1986 aged 85. The house was still there in late 1984, when we took our three children to see it. It hadn't fallen over or blown away, but it seemed more dilapidated than when we had lived in it 22 years earlier. Remarkably, during the late 1980s an American chap driving past one day fell in love with it. He bought it, dismantled it, carted it away, and re-erected it somewhere else.

A pair of characters

Our landlords, Annie and Harry Earl, deserve a section of their own. In their sixties, they were a kindly couple who became our friends and took an avuncular interest in us. They were a surprising pair because their conjugal roles seemed strangely reversed. She stood about 5 foot 5 inches (165 centimetres) tall, was strongly built and tough, had a mannish, forthright manner, and spoke rapidly in a gruff staccato monotone liberally sprinkled with expletives. "I hate bloody flies, Margaret! I always kill bloody flies whenever I see them. Do you hate bloody flies too, Margaret?" she might say while vigorously pumping flyspray around the kitchen. Her round leathery face was weather-beaten and lined; and her pale blue eyes looked at one directly from behind her 'granny' glasses. I never saw her wearing anything other than masculine farming attire — shirt and waistcoat, overalls tucked into gumboots, and an 'Akubra'-style broad-brimmed hat pulled down over her short, curly, steely-grey hair. She was a crack shot with a rifle, and often carried one lest she see a fox among the sheep.

Annie had little sense of humour, didn't smile or laugh often, or suffer fools gladly. She did have musical gifts, however. In her youth she'd played the button accordion in a dance band. On one occasion she retrieved her ancient, battered accordion from Harry's workshop, which was kept locked. She probably hadn't played it in years, but as she wheezed out a few tunes on it for us we could tell she had talent.

Annie was also a bigot. She wasn't herself a church-goer but detested Catholics and Catholicism. When no Catholics were within earshot, she'd refer disparagingly to her Catholic neighbours along the road as 'those Irish Catholics'. Annie approved of Margaret and me because we were Methodists. I doubt that she'd have let us rent the 'Half-Way House' if we'd turned out to be Catholics.

Harry, by contrast, was a gentle, easy-going, whimsical chap who spoke slowly and softly. He had a lively, wry sense of humour, and enjoyed making epigrammatic observations about various situations in a way he knew would amuse us. For instance, when Margaret had asked Harry where the bath and bathroom were, he said in his languid drawl that "Only dirty people need to wash". He was about 6 foot (173 centimetres) tall, of slight build. He might have been taller but was somewhat stooped, making us fear that he might fold in the middle and blow away at the next puff of wind. Harry wasn't fussy about his appearance. He kept his trousers up with a length of hay-baling twine, and was just as likely to wear one of Annie's blouses beneath his ancient jacket if he couldn't find a shirt. He had thinnish white hair, which didn't look as if it was often brushed; he often customarily wore a five-day-old growth of white stubble on his chin; and all this created an overall impression of wispiness.

Annie and Harry Earl were certainly 'characters' such as we'd never met before; but they were only some of various other characters among the Warrambeen community. I'll allude to others in later sections.

Starting work at Warrambeen

Before I drove out to Warrambeen to begin work, I recall that I drove Margaret to her accommodation at the YWCA hostel in Myers Street, Geelong. Several weeks earlier, she and her mother had arranged for her to board there because it was a safe place for young single women to stay, and it was convenient to her school, Newtown, in Ryrie Street. After farewelling our families in Brighton, probably on Sunday afternoon 3 February 1962, we set out for our first experience of living away from home.

When I had seen Margaret settled at the YWCA, I drove 53 kilometres out to Warrambeen, through Batesford, Gerringhap, Bannockburn, Teesdale and Shelford. This was a route I'd be travelling often over the next three years. I settled into the 'Half-Way House' then went across to the school to drop off various materials there. I spent the whole of the next day there, Monday 4 February, preparing for my first day of teaching on the morrow. I probably began by dusting down the shelves, sweeping the floor, checking that loo paper was in the toilets at the northern end of the playground and that the toilets were clean. I also ensured that soap and hand-towel were in place beside the wash-basin in the porch. This was my introduction to the daily janitorial duties that would be mine during all my time at Warrambeen.

I'd brought along various teaching aids that I'd been accumulating, so I laid them out in convenient places. They included charts displaying phonics, spelling lists and the 'times tables'. Open on the desk I placed my daily work program, a day-by-day summary of what I would be teaching to each grade in each subject each day during the current week. As I soon discovered, a thoroughly prepared daily work program was the basis of good rural school teaching practice. It showed what I hoped to accomplish during the week, provided a guide to lesson planning, and formed a retrospective record of teaching activity. Compiling the work program was an onerous chore in my first months of teaching. It filled many hours at night and at weekends, but as I gained experience it became a less arduous task. One good reason for maintaining such a detailed record was that the school inspectors were much impressed by a thoroughly prepared work program.

Next, I checked to see that all the necessary official records were in place in the drawer of the teacher's desk, and that I knew how to tend to them correctly. They included the pupil register, in which I had to enter the names of all newly enrolled students; the attendance register, which had to be filled in twice daily, morning and afternoon; the accounts book, which had to be balanced monthly; the punishment register, in which all instances of corporal punishment had to be entered; and the inspectorial report book, in which the school inspector wrote his assessment of the teacher and the school during his annual visit.

Finally, I set about the hardest job of all — translating the daily work program into a set of lessons for the morrow, then writing up the lessons for each class on the blackboard. What went on the blackboard included a set of arithmetic exercises for each grade; the lists of spelling words to be tested; the grammar and punctuation to be taught; the letters and numbers to be practised during writing sessions; a song to be sung; and illustrations for that day's social studies, nature study and health lessons. Each subject had its own section of the blackboard, and each subject section was divided by grade level. I used different coloured chalk for each subject and grade.

By the time I'd finished, the entire blackboard was covered by my multi-hued calligraphy. I always felt proud of my chalkboard for it was not only visually attractive but demonstrated that purposeful instruction was the reason for State School No. 4793's existence. When the parents occasionally visited, I could tell they were impressed. They'd stand looking at the board for a few seconds then make approving comment. I could hear them thinking, "This teacher is trying very hard to do his best for our kids."

I felt particularly pleased when Margaret's formidable grandmother, Emma Elizabeth Vale (née Grenness, 1873–1972) visited the school that first year. Before her marriage, 'Emma E.' (as we called her behind her back) had taught at a series of one-teacher schools in the remote mountain country of north-eastern Victoria during the 1890s. She looked round my classroom approvingly, inspected the pupils' work and checked what was on the blackboard. "All this takes me back over the years to when I ran schools like this," she remarked wistfully.

My first day of teaching passed without incident. I arrived at the school by 7.30 a.m. to make sure everything was ready for a punctual opening at 9.00. I'd met a couple of my pupils already — Trevor and Dannye Moloney — through my dealings with their parents, Owen and Elvie; but the other 18 and their parents were all strangers. The parents began dropping them off by car at about 8.45, brought them to the door and briefly introduced themselves and their children. As I soon discovered, my pupils would be Daryl Anderson, Peter Bingley and Trevor Moloney in Grade 6; Bruce Fletcher and John Fowler in Grade 5; Patricia ('Tricia') Bingley, Patricia ('Patty') Brugmann, Lawrence Kelly, Peter Latrobe and Dannye Moloney in Grade 4; Glenn Anderson, Marianne Devit, Peter Fowler and Andrew Marshall in Grade 3; Leon Kelly and Colin MacPherson in Grade 2; Anthony ('Tony') Bingley and Susan Bingley in Grade 1; and Shane Anderson and Christine Marshall in Kindergarten.

That was 20 pupils from 12 families spread over seven grades. Teaching all seven grades at once was clearly going to be a challenge. A further complication, as I soon realised, was that various learning disabilities afflicted some within my student population. At least one could be described as a 'slow learner'; a couple were what I'd now describe as 'ADHD', i.e. 'attention-deficit hyperactive disorder', a term that hadn't yet been invented; several were dyslexic, and experienced severe difficulty in learning to read, spell and write; a couple suffered from dyscalculia, great trouble in performing arithmetical tasks; and a couple had speech impediments. I knew nothing about these conditions or the vocabulary describing them back then; and teachers' college hadn't prepared me for such eventualities. I nevertheless did my best to ensure that each of them performed as expected at their grade level.

At the end of the first day's teaching, after 3.30 p.m. when all the children and their parents had departed, I felt like collapsing with exhaustion. I couldn't do that, however, because I had hours of work ahead of me. First I attended to my janitorial tasks; then I wrote up tomorrow's lessons on the blackboard. All this took so long that as darkness approached, at about 6.30, I had to light the kerosene-fuelled 'Tilley' pressure-lamp to see what I was doing. I probably worked for another hour before driving back to a lonely night at the 'Half-Way House', preparing and eating a meal, then spending a couple of hours of Tilley lamp-lit lesson preparation before going to bed at about 10.00.

And so I became the new Warrambeen teacher. My routine during my first days at the school was what I followed for the rest of the term and indeed during all my Warrambeen years. The only relief from it would be on Wednesday evenings, when I'd drive to Geelong to visit Margaret at the YWCA hostel. Then on Friday evening I'd drive back to Geelong, collect Margaret and travel up to Melbourne for a couple of evenings at home with our families. Somewhat reluctantly, about mid-afternoon on the Sunday, we'd farewell our folks in Brighton for the return trip to Geelong and Warrambeen.

The regular routines

Each school week began with a short patriotic ceremony on Monday mornings, as required by Education Department regulations. After assembling in their grade rows on the concrete slab at the front door, they turned to face the flagpole. As one of the pupils raised the

Australian ensign, the rest stood to attention with their right hands over their hearts. They then recited the same mantra that I'd chanted years before at Brighton State School:

> I love God and my country; I honour the flag; I will serve the Queen and cheerfully obey my parents, teachers, and the laws.

That done, they'd file silently into school, stand in rows beside their desks, and wait for me to greet them. "Good morning, girls and boys," I'd say brightly. "Goo-ood mor-ning, Mis-ter Will-is," they'd respond in slow, singsong unison. "Be seated quietly, please, and let's get to work," I'd then instruct.

The daily routine varied according to whoever was the teacher and whatever timetable he followed. (Always 'he': no female teachers were ever posted to Warrambeen, though several one-teacher schools in the district were run by women, the nearest of these at Werneth, 10 kilometres south-west of Rokewood.) During my time at the school, a typical day went something like this:

1) Pupils arrive at school, greet schoolmates, exchange gossip, run around the playground letting off pre-class steam.
2) Sounding of the school bell for the 'opening ceremony', which took place on the concrete slab outside the front door, where the pupils lined up and then filed into the school at a signal from the teacher.
3) After they'd stood at their desks, been greeted by the teacher and told to sit, they took part in 'preliminary activities', e.g. a song, then morning talk, roll call, hygiene inspection (hair brushed neatly, hands and fingernails clean, face scrubbed and teeth shining brightly).
4) 'Hard' work — the '3Rs'. In Maths, this involved including reciting the 'times tables', counting forwards and backwards, mental arithmetic, measurement, the four arithmetical processes (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) and 'sums' (problem-solving using the four processes). In English it meant chanting the spelling of, and being tested on, the spelling list words for the day, reading passages from the Grade readers, practising letter formation and calligraphy, grammar, dictation, composition (creative writing), and the recitation of poetry.
5) Morning recess, with supervised and unsupervised games in the playground.
6) More 'hard' work on the 3Rs.
7) Lunch, then more playground games.
8) 'Easy' work — the cultural and natural science subjects, e.g. health, social studies, nature studies.
9) Afternoon recess.
10) 'Pleasure' activities — art, craft, singing, films, library, Storytime.
11) Tidy up and put-away. then, as the parents' cars gathered outside, Hometime. The first row allowed out was the one that stood straightest and most silent with schoolbags at the ready.
12) And for the teacher, clerical and janitorial duties followed by lesson preparation for the morrow.

Everyone's favourite session was Storytime at the end of the afternoon. That's when I'd read to them from one of the Grade readers, usually the Grade 5 or Grade 6 book, or from a book that one of the kids had brought along. I also used to read them poems. Their favourites were Henry Lawson's 'Ballad of the Drover' and Banjo Paterson's 'Man from Snowy River'.

They'd sit there transfixed, hanging on every word, and by the time I'd finished tears were in their eyes.

'Morning Talk' became another keenly anticipated session during my time at Warrambeen. Someone always wanted to stand up before the class to make an announcement or relate some adventure they'd had. Sometimes so many pupils had so much to say that was interesting, the session took half an hour or more.

The most dramatic moment during any of my many Morning Talk sessions occurred one day when Tricia Bingley stood before the class with something large shoved up her jumper. "Teacher, girls and boys," she announced, "look what I found on my way to school just now!" With a dramatic flourish she then pulled from beneath her jumper a large dead white bird with a long yellow bill. As she held it at arm's length by the neck, its feet trailed on the floor. She explained that the bird had become trapped in a multi-strand barbed-wire wire fence just before she arrived on the scene. It had apparently broken its neck in its struggle to free itself. "Does anyone know what sort of bird it is?" she asked. We didn't, so I consulted Neville Cayley's authoritative book *What bird is that?*, which soon told us that it was a great egret (*Ardea alba*), a tall (80-centimetre), slender, graceful wading bird which is fairly common and widely distributed in south-eastern Australia. Questioning of the class as to what the egret had been doing at Warrambeen elicited various explanations. The consensus was that it had probably been catching yabbies and frogs in Warrambine Creek when something had frightened it, causing it to fly into the fence in a panic. I can't remember what we did with it, but perhaps Tricia took it home to show her parents.

My all-time favourite Morning Talk yarn was one that our teachers' college friend, Margaret Tenney, told us. Her first teaching position was at Kaniva, near the South Australian border in north-western Victoria. One morning a boy in her class stood and announced that his family had just acquired a new car. "That's good news!" Margaret exclaimed; "What sort of car is it?" The boy said it was a 'Holden'. Margaret then asked what colour the Holden was. "Well, when Dad brought it home it was light blue," the boy explained, "but then he stayed up all night repainting it, so now it's dark green. He also fitted new number plates to it." "Thank you, Billy, how very interesting; and now you may take your seat again. Who's next with a story?" Margaret hastily responded.

Janitorial duties

A one-teacher school 'chalkie' was simultaneously a handyman, groundsman, gardener, cleaner and housekeeper. My janitorial routines at Warrambeen were similar to those of thousands of other bush school teachers across Australia. I mowed lawns, planted and pruned trees, weeded gardens, swept and washed the floor, dusted the shelves, kept the handwash basin and taps sparkling, cleaned the toilets, disposed of refuse, carried out minor running repairs, dealt with infestations of vermin, ensured that the roof gutters were cleared of leaf litter, kept the firewood neatly stacked, removed fire hazards, and periodically had the sediment at the bottom of the water tank syphoned out.

As soon as school finished for the day, I dusted the shelves and swept the floor. Once a week I spread disinfectant-soaked sawdust across the floor, which cleansed it as I swept the sawdust away. Occasionally I'd polish the floor as well.

After the sweeping, I'd check and clean the toilets. The separate boys' and girls' toilets were three metres apart and 30 metres from the school on the far (northern) side of the playground. In my last year at the school I connected them with walls and a roof to make a secure toolshed for housing the motor-mower and other garden implements I'd acquired.

The toilets were of the pit type — each built over a large three-metre-deep hole dug into the soil. There was no flushing system. Instead, aided by air from the ventilation pipe, what

went into the pit composted and turned into soil over time. If the school had remained there for another century, perhaps the pits would have overflowed; but at the slow rate they were being filled that time was still many decades away.

The main problem with the toilets was that on windy days, which was most days, wind gusts blew down the ventilation pipe — the 'stink pipe' — with such force that it puffed back up through the hole of the toilet seat. Toilet-paper dropped down the hole wafted upwards, hovering just below seat-level. The best way to make it fall was to drop a small pebble on it. For that reason I kept a small box of pebbles beside the seat. Another hazard was the legendary redback spider that built its web beneath the 'dunny' seat then waited to bite whatever appendage was lowered into the hole. Checking for and clearing away spider webs, and stomping on the spiders, was another part of the daily janitorial routine.

Yet another toilet-related responsibility was to protect the children from being swooped by magpies during the nesting season, in spring, roughly during September and October. The magpies nested in the cypress trees along the school's western fence. They weren't a problem when all the kids were in the playground together because there were too many children to be swooped; but during class time any child crossing the playground to the toilet alone would be attacked. To prevent injury, I let them take the metal garbage bin lid with them as a shield. As they sprinted to the toilet holding aloft their shield, we'd watch the maggies swoop. We'd hear the 'ping' and 'ding' sounds as magpie beaks struck metal.

In my first couple of months at the school, a minor mouse plague was in process. As mentioned, the mice invading the school kept the mouse-traps busy. From time to time during school sessions we'd hear the traps snapping shut. We disposed of the dead mice by dropping them down the toilets.

The mice also found their way into the art cupboard, where I stored the concentrated paint powder issued to schools by the Education Department for painting lessons. The powder came in one-litre waxed cardboard cartons and was in red, yellow, blue, black and white. One job for the teacher and children before each art class was to mix up a batch of paints in little glass jars, with a few extra jars for mixing colours like green, brown and purple. The mice soon discovered that the paint powder was vegetable-based and nutritious. They gnawed their way into the cartons to feast away at the department's expense. Before we could mix the paint powder, we had to pick out the mouse droppings first. The other effect was that wherever the mice scampered, they left behind technicolour turds. After that, every time I swept the floors and dusted the shelves I'd sweep up brightly coloured red, blue, yellow, green and purple mouse droppings. I was still finding them almost three years later as I swept the Warrambeen floors for the last time.

The school committees

Warrambeen had two parents' committees. The School Committee, otherwise known as the 'Men's Committee' (because it had no female members), was the official elected school management board responsible to the Education Department. The Mothers' Club, usually called the 'Women's Committee', was effectively a social club and fundraising auxiliary. In my time at Warrambeen, both strongly and actively supported the school and its teacher.

The School Committee members I got to know best were Owen Moloney, Jim Marshall, Jack Anderson, Terry Bingley and Chick Fowler. The Mothers' Club women who gave me the greatest support were Audrey Marshall, Elvie Moloney, Billie Anderson and Peg Bingley. I admired them all greatly for their individual qualities, their knowledge and skills, the friendship they freely offered, and the encouragement they always gave me.

One reason why Warrambeen was a success story was the active, enthusiastic support the school received from the parent community through their two committees.

Sadly, all the parents I've just named have now died, and most of their children are in late middle age. Many of them are now grandparents; and several might even be great-grandparents. As far as I'm aware, only one of the Mums is still alive; and she must be well into her 90s.

Dealing with the children and their parents

I greatly enjoyed being with my Warrambeen pupils; and in time I came to regard them as a large, happy family in which they were like my little brothers and sisters. In the years since leaving the school, I've come to appreciate what an enormous privilege it was to be their teacher. By granting me my Warrambeen years, God was very gracious.

The Warrambeen children were generally quiet, respectful, well-behaved, good-humoured and eager to learn. Except for one early instance of defiance, which I probably provoked and could have handled better, I had few discipline problems. I worked diligently at my classroom management skills, and that enabled me to run a generally happy school which the kids enjoyed attending.

My greatest pleasure at Warrambeen was to teach the 'littlies', those in Kindergarten and Grade 1, to read and write. They'd begin school not knowing how to do either, but by the end of Grade 1 they'd be reading confidently and independently; they could write their own simple 'stories'; and they could take dictation accurately. As well as that, they'd learnt to count and could do simple addition and subtraction. Reflecting that through me they were becoming literate and numerate gave me a sense of great fulfilment.

I also maintained good relations with all the school's families bar one. The exception was the parents of one of the girls during 1963. In their early 50s, they were the oldest couple among the Warrambeen parents and had a son my age who lived in Geelong. Despite my best efforts, this couple and I never 'clicked'. I was flabbergasted at the interschool sports carnival early in the year, when the mother took me aside and accused me of beating her daughter. I was always patient with the girl and her particular learning difficulty. Dutifully practising the old pedagogical adage, 'Never lay a hand on a child in praise or blame', I'd never touched her nor been angry with her. I protested that I'd done nothing to the girl other than teach her in a professionally disinterested manner.

A few weeks after this confrontation, the girl was absent from school one day. Later in the morning, her father came to the school. When I asked what he wanted, he said his daughter was in hospital suffering meningitis induced by the beatings I'd allegedly been administering. He then walked off without further explanation. After school that afternoon, I drove to their home to try to get to the bottom of the matter. He was uncooperative and resentful, so I ended the conversation by saying I rejected all their false accusations and would take the matter further.

I then drove to see Chick Fowler, the school committee chairman. I explained what had happened and asked him to call a special committee meeting later in the week to discuss the matter. I then rang the school inspector in Colac, Mr Buchanan, to explain what was going on. He needed to be kept informed in case there were official complaints and legal action against me and the Education Department. He told me he thought I was handling the situation the right way and asked me to keep him informed.

At the school committee meeting, the fathers (no mothers) were subdued and embarrassed. Few if any of them said anything. Chick began the meeting by saying he'd called the meeting at my request because of a serious complaint about my conduct. He then asked the girl's father to state his case. The father mumbled something about my mistreating his daughter, then handed Chick a letter which supposedly explained the complaint. Chick

read the letter, then pronounced, "This letter is nonsense. It says nothing about your gripe against the teacher." The father took back his letter, muttering that he was still aggrieved.

When Chick asked me for my comments, I explained that false allegations about me had been made, which I totally rejected. I had a clear conscience because I knew I'd done nothing wrong. If the girls' parents repeated in public their accusations about my beating their daughter, I'd sue them for slander. I went on to say that I'd reported the matter to the school inspector, who was now aware of the accusations and the action I was taking to clear my name. I concluded by saying that I now wished the meeting to pass a vote of confidence in me and my management of the school. If such a resolution were not adopted, I'd regard that as a condemnation of my professional practice at Warrambeen. I'd then immediately seek a transfer to another school. Chick put such a motion to the meeting. Without further discussion, it was adopted almost unanimously. The only dissenter was my accuser, who abstained from voting. The meeting then ended. The fathers dispersed in silence, no doubt disturbed by what they'd just witnessed.

I never spoke to my accusers again. We kept well clear of each other. I didn't discover what had prompted their protest about my alleged physical abuse of their daughter. At the end of the year they withdrew her from the school to enrol her in a Geelong school.

Meanwhile, the teacher-pupil relationship between me and the girl continued amicably as if nothing had happened. She was back in school within a day or two, so she can't have been suffering meningitis. She seemed to be her normal happy, polite, diligent self.

In the weeks that followed, several Dads who'd attended the meeting told me I'd handled an embarrassing situation well, and they assured me that they knew the allegations were false. My friend Howard Ross, who'd heard about the incident, expressed the characteristically blunt view that the girl's father, with whom he share-farmed, should be 'tarred-and-feathered then horsewhipped'.

School discipline

Corporal punishment was still commonplace in Victorian government schools in the early 1960s. A quick flip through the Warrambeen punishment register showed that the previous teachers at the school had used the strap, albeit sparingly. Only the boys were ever strapped; and they joked about 'Old Danger', the strap that one former teacher had wielded.

I was initially reluctant to use a strap, but I eventually did because occasions arose when its use seemed warranted. The four offences for which I was prepared to inflict corporal punishment were defiantly back-chatting me, swearing, vandalism and bullying. I limited the strapping to one stroke delivered without much force; and I punctiliously entered the incident in the punishment register immediately afterwards. If the punishment register still exists somewhere in Education Department archives, it would show that I only ever used the strap on five or six occasions.

Fortunately, only one pupil ever defiantly challenged my authority. It was in my first months at the school, when I wasn't as experienced as I became later. He was an older boy. I didn't strap him because I knew I'd provoked him. Instead, I sat him outside for ten minutes until his anger subsided. After he'd returned to class, I let him see that as far as I was concerned our contretemps was over and done with. That evening I asked Margaret what she thought because I've always valued her judgement. "You can't let him defy you," she said; "but nor should you create situations where he'll want to." Good advice! Thereafter I consciously strove to be even-handed and not provoke anger among my pupils. I never had any more trouble with the boy. Our former friendly dealings with each other soon resumed.

As far as I recall, there was never any swearing or foul-mouthed talk that I was aware of, and only ever one case of vandalism. The latter occurred when a former pupil returned to

the school. While wandering the grounds he drew a swastika on the shelter-shed door with a Texta-colour. I found it after he'd departed, so on my way home from school that evening I called at his house to ask him to erase his graffiti. He did so the next morning.

Bullying was my main reason for using the strap. The older and bigger boys sometimes pushed the littlies around. If I ever discovered that, say, a Grade 5 boy had struck a Grade 1 girl, he'd receive a cut of the strap.

Perhaps I was lucky, or maybe I soon acquired effective school management skills, but I really experienced very few discipline problems at Warrambeen. By and large, my pupils were well-mannered, well-behaved, polite, good-hearted, diligent little country kids who were being well brought up by their parents.

In 1990 when we held a school reunion in Bingley's Woolshed on the 'Warrambeen' estate, each one of us made a speech. I used mine to apologise for the corporal punishment I'd administered. I said I deeply regretted ever having used the strap because it demeaned both the pupil and the teacher.

Quirky behaviours

There were some quirky and sometimes annoying pupil behaviours that never merited punishment but rather behaviour modification strategies. One boy used to entangle himself in the strands of wire of the fence near the front gate as he was waiting for his parents to collect him after school. He looked like a wrestler tied up in the ropes of the ring by an opponent. I kept an eye on him through the window lest he strangle himself. Another lad used to sip the ink from his inkwell surreptitiously, sucking it up through his hollow pen-holder. I always knew when he'd been imbibing because of the tell-tale blue stains on his lips and tongue. One of the girls habitually pulled the shoulder of her cardigan across her face to massage her nose. Another had a habit of inserting her little finger up her nostril as far as it would reach. Yet another was so dominantly left-handed that she was forever smudging and making a mess of her workbooks.

I still have no idea what deep-seated psychological needs might have prompted such behaviours. I had no training in psychology and knew nothing about behaviour modification. All I could do was frown at the pupil to show my displeasure. That had the desired effect, but only temporarily because they'd later be at it again. Neither teachers' college nor the Dip.Ed. I was studying had told me anything about handling such cases. Perhaps If I'd specialised in 'special needs' teaching, I'd have been better able to help my pupils control their embarrassing and potentially dangerous behavioural tics.

Characters

It wasn't only my pupils and Annie and Harry Earl whose behavioural oddities distinguished them. Several of the parents were renowned throughout the district for certain quirky mannerisms. One of the Mums, whom I'll call 'Drusilla', was notorious for listening in to the conversations conducted on the party-line phone that connected hers with neighbouring homes. One yarn I heard was that she was caught out one evening while listening to a neighbour's private conversation. The neighbour, suspecting she was eavesdropping, said something like, "I reckon we're about to experience a long, hot summer. And you'd agree with that, Drusilla, wouldn't you?" "Oh, yes, Ted, I certainly do!" blurted Drusilla.

One of the Dads, a chap I'll call 'Claudius', overused the expression 'turn around', which he managed to fit into most of his utterances. Typical was something like this: "I'll turn around now and drive up to Ballarat to collect some spare parts for the tractor; after that I'll turn around and drop by the footy ground to see if everything's ready for Saturday's

match; and then I might turn around to have a few beers at the pub before I turn around to go home." On one famous occasion a conversation like this prompted the forthright Annie Earl to exclaim, "For heaven's sake stop turning around, Claudius! You're making me giddy!"

Another Dad, who shall be 'Augustus' here, conversed in a series of statements that always ended with the question "eh?" For example: "This could be a bad season for grassfires, eh? We should make sure the grass around the school is kept short, eh? We wouldn't want the school to burn down, eh? If it did, we'd have to send our children somewhere else, eh?" This speech mannerism earned him the nickname 'Augustus-eh'.

The greatest character of all, however, was a Dad I'll call 'Aurelius'. Aurelius often went barefoot. A task for his wife every evening was to extract prickles from the soles of his feet with a pair of tweezers. On a frosty morning Aurelius might visit a neighbour. He'd be barefoot as usual but would have a woollen scarf wrapped around his head, turban-like, to keep his ears warm. "Nippy on the ears, isn't it?" he'd exclaim. Another of his quirks was that he went stark naked when driving his tractor around his paddocks. He kept a pair of football shorts on the tractor, however, so that if anyone should approach to talk business, he could spare them embarrassment by slipping on his shorts. Not surprisingly, Aurelius was so deeply suntanned he reminded Margaret of an Indian mahout. She used to enjoy his company because he was perennially cheerful and his off-beat, outrageously cheeky comments always made her laugh. For all his behavioural oddities, Aurelius was a genius at mental arithmetic. Despite being only primary school-educated, he could rapidly do four-column addition in his head. It was said of him that if he attended a sheep sale, he'd know at its end — without the aid of pencil and paper — how many sheep had been sold and what total sum of money they'd fetched.

The Rokewood-Corindhap Grasshoppers

In my first year at Warrambeen, I began playing Australian Rules football for the local team, the Rokewood-Corindhap 'Grasshoppers'. This was at Owen Moloney's prompting. In an early conversation with me he asked what position I played. I replied that I played at left or right half, but that was in hockey, the game I played regularly. "Hockey's a girls' game!" he snorted; "You need to be playing football." I realised that playing footy would be a good way of gaining acceptance in the district.

Owen took me along to football training the next Thursday afternoon. Although I hadn't played the game for ten years, not since Form 3 at MHS, I was picked to play in the Grasshoppers' 'seconds' or lower grade team the next Saturday. I surprised myself and my teammates by playing well.

I had few skills: I couldn't kick the ball very straight or far, and I wasn't much good at taking overhead marks. Despite that, I was nimble and tenacious. I was unafraid of tackling even the biggest and toughest opponents. I found I could beat them to the ball, sprint free, then dispose of it to a teammate before they could thump me. Our coach, Norm Sharp, a former star with the Geelong 'Cats', stated the situation nicely during a pep-talk before a match. Borrowing a famous line from Banjo Paterson's comic ballad, 'The Geebung Polo Club', he said, "Ian, you're a key player out there on the wing. Although you have mighty little science you have a mighty lot of dash, so keep pushing the ball forward!"

I played with the 'seconds' for three seasons, and for some matches I was promoted to the 'firsts' or senior team. During my second season I won the club's 'Best and Fairest' award in the seconds team. (The 'Best and Fairest' was the chap who accumulated the most umpires' votes for having been the best player afield in each match.) It was the only sporting trophy I ever won, except for the medallions I later received each time I completed a marathon. As I write this, it sits on the bookshelf above my computer.

I loved playing bush footy and travelling to the home grounds of the other teams in the competition. The playing fields varied enormously in quality. The best was Skipton, where the oval was level, the grass as well-trimmed as on a bowling green, and the spectators could sit in a grandstand. The worst was Illabarook, which doubled as a sheep paddock during the week. It was consequently littered with their fresh droppings. On a wet day, the players would slither and slide as they grappled for the slippery ball. They'd come off the ground heavily smeared with liquified sheep manure at the end of the game.

Margaret often accompanied me to the matches. Sometimes we'd travel with the Moloneys in their car. Margaret didn't greatly enjoy that because after the match Owen would insist on taking me into the Rokewood pub for a beer. While we did that, Elvie, Margaret and the children would sit outside in the car, drinking glasses of lemonade that Owen brought out to them.

The District Inspector

All government primary school teachers across Victoria lived in fear of the Education Department's district inspector, commonly known as the 'DI'. The purpose for employing DIs was quality-control: the DI ensured that the Department's teachers were competent and that they taught the curriculum prescribed for government schools. The DI customarily spent a week or more annually in the larger schools assessing the individual teachers' professional performance. In the one-teacher schools, he (never she) usually spent only one day, though if he had concerns about the teacher or the school, he might return for a follow-up visit.

The children didn't know that the DI was there to assess the teacher, because the teachers always convinced their classes that he had come to examine them. This subterfuge succeeded in putting the pupils on their best behaviour for as long as the DI was in the school.

At the end of his inspection, the DI would write a detailed report in the school's Inspection Report Book, which remained in the school. This would be countersigned by the teacher to show that he/she had read the DI's remarks.

As well writing the report, the DI would award the teacher a mark for promotional purposes. It was on a four-point scale: 'U' ('Unsatisfactory'), 'G' ('Good'), 'VG' ('Very Good') and 'OS' ('Outstanding'). A teacher marked 'U' would have to undergo further inspections until he/she reached a satisfactory level of performance. 'G' meant that the teacher was performing satisfactorily without yet being ready for promotion. 'VG' signified that the teacher was thoroughly competent and ready for promotion. 'OS' meant that the teacher was of superior achievement and should be given accelerated promotion.

Most hard-working beginning teachers would be marked 'G' in their first couple of years and would then attain the coveted 'VG' in the third year. The system had economic ramifications because the "VG' made one eligible for promotion and, with that, a higher salary. I was marked 'VG' in my third year. Only one Warrambeen teacher claimed to have achieved the 'VG' in his second year of teaching.

For administrative convenience, the Department divided the state into a series of districts or 'inspectorates', each centred on a provincial city. Warrambeen was at the north-eastern extremity of the Colac inspectorate, which extended from Corindhap in the north to Beech Forest in the south, and from Derrinallum in the west to Warrambeen in the east. The adjacent inspectorates were Geelong in the east, Ballarat in the north and Hamilton in the west. Within each inspectorate, the DI was the Department's most senior official. As such, he wielded great authority in the dozens of schools he superintended.

Being a DI was a demanding, busy job that usually went to the Department's most outstanding senior teachers and administrators. Country DIs were obliged to travel far and

wide throughout their far-flung inspectorates maintaining contact with all their remote one-teacher schools. Most came to the position after a long and successful a career as a senior principal or teacher's college lecturer.

Mr Buchanan

The Colac DI during my Warrambeen years was Max Buchanan, who, like me, was a MHS Old Boy. New to the job at the beginning of 1962, he replaced the former DI, a Mr Budge, who had transferred to the Bendigo inspectorate. Mr Buchanan had previously lectured at Burwood Teachers' College, where he had the reputation of being a charismatic, inspirational teacher.

I first met Mr Buchanan about 5.30 one afternoon some four weeks after I'd begun teaching at Warrambeen. I was still writing up the next day's lessons on the blackboard when I heard a knock on the door. Waiting outside was a carefully groomed chap in a well-tailored suit and tie. Seemingly aged in his late forties, he looked like a senior company executive. Behind him, parked next to my Mini-Minor was a sparkling new mauve-coloured FB Holden. "Good afternoon, I'm Max Buchanan, your District Inspector," he introduced himself. I invited him in. He took in the schoolroom at a glance and noted the blackboard with an appraising eye.

"I'm surprised to find you here so late," he began. I said I always worked this late. "As you're a beginning teacher, that's what I'd expect," he responded. I wondered if he deliberately visited his new teachers late to see if, like me, they were putting in long hours.

Mr Buchanan went on to ask how I was settling in at the school, what my accommodation arrangements were, and whether I was experiencing any difficulties. After I'd answered these questions, he astounded me by inviting me to become a lecturer at Geelong Teachers' College. The college apparently had a vacancy for a university graduate like me. I said I was flattered by the invitation but thought it would be presumptuous of me to accept the offer when I'd had less than a month's teaching experience. "I agree with your reason for not accepting the position," he remarked, "but I have instructions from departmental headquarters to identify graduates who would be suitable as college lecturers."

I've often wondered what direction my career might have taken if I'd accepted the DI's offer. In 1974 the college joined with the Gordon Institute of Technology to become the nucleus around which the new Deakin University coalesced. If I'd gone to Geelong Teachers' College and had stayed on, I'd have been in on the ground-floor at the start-up of a new university; and that might have led to the chair in History I'd like to have filled. On the other hand, throughout my 42-year salaried working career, my habit was to move on every few years to another job and different challenges. I probably wouldn't have remained at GTC long enough to join the Deakin staff.

Before departing, Mr Buchanan said he wished me to spend a morning observing an experienced rural school teacher in action. He subsequently arranged for me to visit Mannibadar School No. 4446, about 23 kilometres north-west of Rokewood. I went there several weeks later. Mr Buchanan sent the district relief teacher to run my school during the morning I was at Mannibadar. After handing over to him, I drove to Mannibadar, which was on a side road off the main Rokewood-Skipton road. I found a picturesque old-style rural school in a bush setting. It occupied a hollow above a tributary of the Woady Yaloak Creek. The teacher, an obliging chap several years older than me, made me welcome. I spent a profitable morning watching what he did and making notes for future reference. He said if I ever needed guidance, he'd be happy for me to return. I never did, because I didn't think I needed to, but on several occasions I consulted the teachers at the schools nearest mine — Bill Caulfield at Shelford West on the Shelford-Mount Mercer road about eight kilometres

north-east of Warrambeen, and Bernie Cook in Shelford. Even though their schools were in the Geelong rather than the Colac inspectorate, we experienced common problems and benefited from exchanging ideas.

My subsequent dealings with Max Buchanan were not so happy as those at the beginning of 1962. He was an autocrat, convinced he was always right. "My way or the highway!" He 'talked down' to junior teachers like me, treating us like naughty schoolchildren. Once a year all the primary teachers in his district were given a 'pupil-free day' to travel to Colac to attend an all-day seminar he organised. This consisted mainly of an extended pep-talk during which he laid down the law, telling us what he expected of us. For me, the main benefit of these gatherings was the opportunity of fraternising with the 'chalkies' from the other one-teacher schools, whom I'd never otherwise meet.

During the three successive annual inspections that Mr Buchanan made in my time at Warrambeen, he certainly gave me credit for the good things I was doing. He made approving comment on my diligent attention to both the '3 Rs' and the cultural subjects. He could see I was working hard to develop the school, and he approved my improvements to the grounds and buildings.

Anyone reading back over the DIs' reports on Warrambeen would soon realise the inspectors generally thought that:

- the Warrambeen children were bright, interested, keen to learn, well-disciplined and polite
- the parents supported the school tirelessly through the official elected School Committee and the Mothers' Club
- the teachers all tried hard to do their best
- together the teacher and his pupils formed a happy and industrious learning team.

Despite those favourable impressions, Mr Buchanan seemed determined to find fault. The carping comments he made in his reports about particular pupils' sub-standard achievement irritated me greatly because they took no account of the range of severe learning difficulties suffered by some. Nor did they give credit for my effort to address the children's individual needs. For instance, one year he commented adversely on the halting reading of one boy. The lad, who was severely dyslectic, was receiving much individual attention from me as I helped him with his spelling, writing and word recognition. I myself was pleased with his progress under such tuition.

My last inspection, in early December 1964, didn't begin well. It took place on a Monday. Knowing it was due, I'd spent the entire weekend from morning to evening mowing the lawns, weeding the gardens, thoroughly cleaning the school, the toilets and the outbuildings, ensuring that all the records were up to date, and the blackboard crammed with visually attractive, thoroughly planned and pedagogically sound lessons. Arguably, the school had reached its zenith. It was certainly the best it had ever been under my stewardship.

By the time I'd finished my preparations, dusk had gathered, and Margaret would be worrying that I hadn't come home yet. Too exhausted for any more, I left the final floor sweepings, about a dust-pan full, in a small, neat pile just inside the door. I made a mental note to arrive five minutes earlier next day to clear it into the garbage can as soon as I arrived. Next morning, however, my car broke down on the way to school with a petrol blockage. I called in at Ross's to ask Howard for assistance. He got the motor going again, drove me to the school, dropped me off and then took my car back home to work on it.

I eventually arrived at the school 40 minutes late. Mr Buchanan was waiting outside with the children. "Who's that fellow who's just brought you to school?" he demanded. I explained that my car had broken down and that Howard was an obliging local farmer who'd

fix my car and return it later in the day. As I ushered the DI inside, he had to step over my little pile of rubbish. He accepted my excuses for arriving late and for leaving a pile of dirt inside the door; but in his report noted that I should attend to janitorial duties the afternoon before, not the morning of an inspection.

Fortunately, the inspection then proceeded as I'd hope it would. Mr Buchanan wrote approvingly of what I was accomplishing. He also gave me a 'VG' assessment, making me eligible for promotion to Class III.

By the time of Max Buchanan's last inspection, I'd already made plans to transfer into Secondary Division. I'd recently been appointed to a position at Norlane High School in Geelong; and I'd even been granted tenancy of a nearby Housing Commission house. Mr Buchanan seemed personally affronted that I should wish to quit Primary Division. I guess he was reluctant to lose well-qualified, experienced primary teachers to the secondary sector. He asked why I wished to move on. I explained that I was feeling isolated at a one-teacher school and needed the stimulation of working closely with other teachers. Further, I wished to become a History teacher; I'd just completed a Dip.Ed. with that in mind; and I aimed to undertake postgraduate studies in History at Melbourne University. He accepted my rationale, wished me well, and said that one day when I was a senior History master, I'd enjoy running my own History Room.

I left Warrambeen several weeks later after the end of the school year. I was confident in my pedagogical and administrative skills. I knew I could apply these in other schools and education systems. My three years at the school had therefore been an important step forward into my subsequent teaching career.

I met Mr Buchanan again about 25 years later, when he attended a MHS reunion that Dad and I also went to. I introduced myself to him, saying that many years ago when I'd been teaching at Warrambeen, he'd been my DI and had visited my school on various occasions. He remembered me and recalled that I'd transferred to a high school in Geelong. "What have you done with your life since then?" he asked.

I explained that I'd never taken up the Norlane High School position but instead had gone to Papua New Guinea, where I'd taught in secondary schools and lectured at the University of Technology. I'd meanwhile completed postgraduate degrees in history; I was practising part-time as an historian; I was writing books; and to pay my mortgage was working as a middle-level manager in the head office of the ACT Schools Authority. He observed that my professional career had taken some unexpected changes of course, then went on to tell me all about his son, a medical specialist of whom he was inordinately proud.

Extracurricular activities

As well as being an official outlier of the Education Department, the Warrambeen school was the centre of active communal life for the surrounding farming families. The following paragraphs illustrate this point.

1. <u>The 'Big' and 'Little' Sports</u>

   Warrambeen participated in two annual athletics and games carnivals, usually conducted midway through first term. These were known as the 'Big Sports' and the 'Little Sports'. The former were for the widely dispersed primary schools of the northern area of the Colac inspectorate, including those around Lismore, Derrinallum, Cressy and Rokewood. The 'Big Sports' were divided into two divisions, one for the larger schools in the towns and the other for the smaller one-teacher schools.

The 'Little Sports' were for the schools around Rokewood, including Warrambeen, Corindhap, Rokewood, Werneth, Illabarook, Wilgul, Wallinduc and perhaps others whose names I've forgotten.

Both 'Sports' were organised by committees comprising the head teachers of the participating schools, but in reality most of the work was done by the committee secretary, a position that rotated annually between the head teachers of the schools taking part. Though being secretary entailed enormous effort, one could not refuse when one's turn came round. My turn came in 1964, when I was appointed secretary of the 'Little Sports', which were always held on the Rokewood football and cricket oval.

The parents and children loved both sets of 'Sports', and they all turned out in force to support the Warrambeen team wherever the carnival was taking place. Each team had its own uniform, consisting of white sports shirt, shorts, socks and sandshoes, with a distinctive vest in the school's colours. The Warrambeen vests, lovingly sewn by the ladies of the Mothers' Club, displayed a large gold 'W' on a black background.

One principle of team formation was that every pupil must participate, no matter how athletically inept. Even it meant taking part in only the egg-and-spoon, three-legged or sack races, or as a member of the tunnel-ball or cross-ball squads, each pupil took part in a couple of age-graded events. Both parents and pupils cheered themselves hoarse in every event the Warrambeenites contested.

Warrambeen always did quite well in both the 'Sports'. We never won the 'Little Sports' championship, because that was something the nimble Werneth team usually did; however, in 1964 at Derrinallum we were the champion team in the small schools division of the 'Big Sports'. To win the coveted trophy, for many weeks we practised before school and at lunchtime on the long strip of mown grass just outside the school's eastern boundary. By the time 'Sports' day came round, my pupils were sprinting and tossing the basketball and medicine-ball like never before. Great was our elation when we were declared the winners and received the trophy, a large and elaborate shield.

2. Education Day

Education Day, usually conducted in September, was the government school system's annual public relations day. It was one set aside to showcase the Education Department's achievements by allowing parents and citizens to visit schools to see what they were doing.

At Warrambeen we always made a fuss of Education Day. We'd brightly decorate the schoolroom; there'd be special displays of the pupils' exercise books and art and craftwork; the nature study table would be well stocked with interesting exhibits; and the blackboard was an arresting work of art of its own, with that day's lessons completely covering its entire expanse. For half an hour I'd conduct a typical school session, demonstrating how I rotated between all seven classes, teaching each in turn as my pupils worked away studiously on their assigned tasks. We'd then sing some favourite songs; and individual students would stand to recite our best-loved poems. I'd make sure that every pupil stood and said something, which gladdened their proud parents' hearts.

Somehow, we managed to squeeze in all the Mums and Dads, the younger brothers and sisters not yet at school plus a few visitors as well. The kids were always on their best behaviour and at their most cooperative. They sang as sweetly as angels for their visitors, and it was hard to tell who enjoyed the singing the most — the kids or their parents.

We always concluded with a jolly afternoon tea prepared and served by the Mothers' Club. Everyone departed convinced that State School No. 4793 must be among Victoria's best.

3. Excursions

I've always been a great advocate of the school excursion, taking my students into the outside world to see and experience 'on the ground' aspects of the curriculum that might otherwise be mere chatter about the abstract topics.

At Warrambeen I conducted three excursions a year, one each term. They began with 'nature walks' on warm days to see the wildflowers blooming, the birds nesting, and the fish leaping in Warrambine Creek. On one occasion this led to a scary experience when Bruce Fletcher, a Grade 6 boy, almost trod on a tiger snake, which reared up and lunged at him. Fortunately it missed. Before it could strike again, Bruce had scrambled up and atop the nearest fence post. I yelled out to the kids to freeze and not to go scampering off through the grass. I then went after the snake with a stick, but it slithered away through the long grass towards the creek.

A more ambitious 'nature walk' was a hiking expedition up Mount Mercer, a low volcanic cone nine kilometres north-east of the school, to see its deep, wide crater. We'd been talking about volcanoes in nature study, so the trip to Mount Mercer helped them understand vulcanism and local geography better.

Other excursions were our weekly swimming lessons in the Eastern Beach seawater swimming enclosure in Geelong during summer months. The classes were run by the Education Departments specialist physical education teachers. The Mums and Dads provided the transport. The kids loved these expeditions, which took them away from the school for an afternoon a week and allowed them to buy ice-creams to lick on the journey home.

In my last year we went on an excursion to Melbourne to ride on a river boat from Princes Bridge down through the docks to the Yarra River mouth and back. And in my last weeks at the school we had an expedition to Creswick to explore an ancient mine tunnel and then swim in the Calembeen Park swimming hole.

4.Religious Instruction

Not an excursion as such, but a regular weekly event that took some of the pupils out of class was a half-hour of religious instruction, 'RI'. That was when the Presbyterian Minister from Shelford visited the school to conduct RI for the Protestants. Half the student population comprised Catholics, and they didn't receive RI because the priest from Rokewood wasn't interested in visiting government schools. Instead, the teacher supervised the Catholic children in the shelter shed while the Protestants did RI in the schoolroom.

The Protestants used to look on enviously as the Catholics and I departed for the shelter shed. They knew I'd be spending the time telling the Catholics outrageously tall stories to keep them entertained. The stories always included a cast of characters who were the pupils themselves with their names slightly altered by transposing their initials. Thus, the heroes included people such as 'Mevor Troloney' (Trevor Moloney), 'Darianne Mevit' (Marianne Devit), 'Kelen Helly' (Helen Kelly), 'Ane Shanderson' (Shane Anderson) and so on. The Catholic kids thought this was hilarious, and would plead for more.

A typical tall story during RI might have gone something like this:

Once upon a time, long ago, a wild colonial boy called Mevor Troloney was riding Maverick, his trusty steed, through the great Australian bush. Suddenly he heard a cry for help. Looking to where the sound came from, he espied a damsel in distress. Her name was Darianne Mevit and she was cowering against the trunk of a gigantic red gum because a savage pack of dingoes was about to attack and devour her. Cracking his stockwhip, which sounded like a clap of thunder, Mevor rode straight at them. Terrified by the stockwhip and Maverick's pounding hooves, the dingoes fled to the safety of their lair in a nearby gold mine tunnel, where, in the dark, they fell to the bottom of a deep shaft at the end of the tunnel and were all killed. Just then, Darianne's uncle, Ane Shanderson, rode up on his famous thoroughbred, Ked Nelly. He hoisted Darianne onto Ked Nelly's saddle, gratefully fixed his eye on Mevor, and said, "Thanks for saving my defenceless niece, pal. You're a real hero! I'm going to ensure that you're awarded the OBM (Outstandingly Brave Medal) by the Governor in a public ceremony at Government House in Melbourne…. etc etc etc.

5. The Half-Way Sales

One important date in the school calendar was that of the Half-Way Sales. This was a sheep auction held one afternoon in November. It was conducted in the saleyard opposite the school on the side road into the 'Warrambeen' estate. Hundreds of people from around the district attended, and thousands of sheep were sold. Most of the parents were present either as buyers or sellers or spectators. It was pointless to try to conduct lessons with the excitement and clamour of the sales going on right outside our door. I'd therefore dismiss the school and allow my pupils to go off to join their parents. Meanwhile, that gave me an opportunity to finish my janitorial, clerical and lesson preparation duties early.

6. The Christmas Concert

The school year culminated in the Christmas Concert. This was a gala event held in Bingley's Woolshed, a graceful heritage structure of bluestone basalt a couple of hundred metres from the Bingley family's 'Warrambeen' estate homestead. Not only did the parents and children attend, but visitors came from near and far because the Warrambeen annual concert was renowned for being one of the district's best shows. My parents usually travelled from Melbourne to be with us because they knew it was the most important day of the year for me.

The Warrambeen teacher was the impresario. It was a role he could not refuse because the school community expected it of him. Not to have run a good concert would have incurred universal condemnation. Always concerned for my professional reputation, I strove to stage the best concerts the school had ever seen.

With the cooperation of the Bingley family, I decorated the woolshed, created a performance area with a stage curtain, and arranged rows of seating. I ensured that every pupil had an individual role to play, and that the program included a wide range of items. We staged comic sketches, choral singing, humorous monologues, the recitation of favourite ballads, miming sequences and comic dialogues. I went to no end of trouble to assemble a wardrobe of appropriate stage costumes. What in effect we were doing was staging a lively variety show. To ensure that the program flowed smoothly, we spent weeks rehearsing. By the time concert evening arrived, all the pupils knew exactly what they must do and could effortlessly perform without stage fright.

At the end of the evening the Mothers' Club would provide a lavish supper. As usual, the Mums excelled. Everyone went home afterwards knowing that the Warrambeen kids had given them a superb night's entertainment.

> Looking back on it all 60 years later, I realise that the Warrambeen concerts were not only great fun but an important part of the pupils' education. Through the concerts they learned to work together harmoniously, to gain in self-confidence, and to strive for excellence. Although I always dreaded the vast effort the concerts entailed, I can now appreciate that, pedagogically, they were among the best achievements of my entire 21-year classroom teaching career.

Sadly, when the school closed these activities ended. Without such events to help sustain it, the community around the school dissolved. Many of the soldier settler families were reaching retirement age, and so they began selling up and moving away. Few sons of their families wished to take over the farms because life on the settlement farms was a continual hard struggle against the elements, the rock-strewn soils, capricious markets, rising production costs, and the loneliness of living in widely separated and isolated houses.

The farms were often sold to prosperous neighbours who were expanding their holdings. Alternatively, the farms were acquired by the large pastoral estates from which they'd originally been excised. Within 20 years the local population had contracted dramatically. By the early 1990s, it comprised mainly the occupants of the 'Warrambeen' estate — the Bingley-Taylor family and their employees. In short, the district reverted to its pre-settler status, namely a thinly populated region of vast estates without a local community.

The Warrambeen community might have disappeared into the dustbin of history, but I'll always remember it with abiding affection. We made lifelong friends among its members. Most of the parents were wonderfully warm, hospitable and supporting. I feel privileged to have been placed among them. An even greater privilege was to have been entrusted with the schooling of their children. Being their teacher was a great responsibility, but it was one I accepted gladly and fulfilled enthusiastically. More than 60 years later I can look back on my three Warrambeen years as among the happiest of my life.

Warrambeen also gave me a lifelong love of one-teacher schools. I've visited them in several Australian states and in remote parts of England and Scotland. Such schools have their disadvantages, mainly isolation from other teachers and pupils; but they also have their advantages. A good bush school is a secure and supportive learning environment for children. Because class sizes are lower than in large city schools, the teacher is better able to give the pupils individual attention.

Sadly, state governments seeking economies of scale have shut down many hundreds of small rural schools in Australia in recent decades. The children are bussed into large regional towns and might spend three hours or more a day travelling back and forth to school. The losers are the country children and parents, not to mention the communities that simply vanished once the schools closed.

A wedding and a honeymoon

Margaret and I married on Saturday afternoon, 12 May 1962, at the end of our first term of teaching. We took a week and a half's special leave from our schools to prepare ourselves. Relief teachers were engaged to cover our classes while we were away. We had a big wedding in the Male Street Methodist Church in Brighton, followed by a reception in 'The Delphic', a high-class function centre at the top end of Little Collins Street in Melbourne. Margaret's bridesmaid was her friend Wendy Evans; her younger sister Susan and my middle sister Helen were second and third bridesmaids. My best man was my mate Tony Irvine, and my groomsmen were my old pals Bill Cross and Charlie Norman. The officiating Minister was the Rev. Ivan Blake, who was in his first year at the Male Street church.

We spent a week away on our honeymoon driving to Sydney via the Princes Highway through East Gippsland then up the New South Wales South Coast in our almost new Mini-Minor. We camped out in some places and elsewhere we stayed in either caravan parks or motels. After a few days in Sydney, we drove back to Melbourne along a circuitous route that more or less followed the Hume Highway.

Along the way we experienced several disconcerting interludes. At Orbost in East Gippsland, for instance, we arrived after dark. We drove to the far side of the town, where we found what seemed like a convenient open field in which to camp. We pitched our two-person tent about 50 metres from the highway, rolled out our sleeping bags, locked our car, then went to sleep. Shortly after first light next morning, perhaps 5.45 a.m., I was woken by what sounded like rain beating against the tent. Then I realised the sound was coming from just above my head, so I clambered from my sleeping bag then poked my head out the tent flap to investigate. What I saw was a huge dog piddling copiously against the side of the tent. When I yelled at it, it loped away to pee somewhere else. I then shook the tent vigorously to rid it of as much dog pee as possible, clambered back into my sleeping bag and went back to sleep for another couple of hours.

At about 8.30 a.m. we were awoken by the chatter and laughter of children. Looking out the tent flap again, I could see we'd camped opposite the local high school. The kids arriving early for school seemed greatly amused that someone was camping only 30 metres from their school's front gate. To spare ourselves further embarrassment, we hurriedly dressed, rolled up our sleeping bags, packed our belongings in our kitbags, took down the tent, stowed everything in the boot and then drove off.

We spent the next couple of nights at Mallacoota Inlet, near the New South Wales border in far eastern Victoria. We pitched our tent in a public camping reserve on the foreshore where there were toilets and hot showers. The chap in charge greeted us by saying, "Honeymooners, aren't you?" We asked him how he knew that. "It stands out a mile," he said, then told us that we both looked so young we should still be at home with our mothers.

At the end of our fortnight of honeymooning, we visited our families in Melbourne for a couple of days. We then drove to Warrambeen to take up joint residence in the 'Half-Way House'. And with that we began a new chapter in our long life together as a couple.

The school bus

To get to her job in Geelong each day, Margaret took the school bus. Through an arrangement with the Education Department, she was allowed to travel free of charge if she agreed to supervise the secondary students using the service. Little supervision was needed, because the driver, Hec Stone, a chap I played football with at Rokewood, maintained firm discipline.

Margaret caught the bus at its terminus, outside Lorna Warwick's farm gate, 6 kilometres on the Shelford side of the 'Half-Way House'. It left there at 7.30 a.m. to deliver its passengers to their schools in Geelong by 9.00. It arrived back again at 5.00 p.m. On the way to and from Geelong it collected and dropped off students at various stopping places.

We usually managed to catch the bus on time, but if we'd overslept Margaret would still be pulling on her clothes and brushing her hair as we sped towards Warwick's. After three month's marriage, Margaret became pregnant with Rosemary. She suffered such appalling morning sickness that some mornings she wasn't ready to board the bus at 7.30 a.m. On those days we'd have to chase the bus in hope of catching it at its next stopping place. Some mornings the bus would have reached Bannockburn before we caught up with it.

Hec Stone was always very obliging. He'd see us in his rear-vision mirror, so he'd pull over to allow Margaret to board. If he'd already passed Bannockburn, however, we wouldn't

bother him. I'd drive Margaret all the way to Newtown, using the short cut down the Geringhap-Fyansford Road. This took us into Fyansford on the Barwon River and thence directly to the western end of Ryrie Street. When we did that, I still had time to get back to Warrambeen in time to open the school punctually at 9.00 a.m.

At the end of the day there was another problem. I'd often become so preoccupied with my janitorial and lesson preparation duties that I'd lose track of the time. "Good grief!" I'd exclaim; "it's 4.57 p.m. and in another couple of minutes Margaret'll be arriving at Warwick's gate!" I'd then make a hasty exit from the school to dash up the road to collect her. As often as not, Margaret would have begun walking towards the 'Half-Way House'. Sometimes she got as far as Ross's dam, about 500 metres from Warwick's gate. Sometimes she walked all the way to Ross's. If I couldn't find her along the road, I'd call in there, where I'd find Grace and Margaret chatting over a cup of coffee. On one occasion Grace told me my behaviour was thoughtless and irresponsible.

Another person who used to collect Margaret sometimes was a middle-aged chap from Rokewood universally known as 'Ralph the Roadman'. He was a Leigh Shire employee, his job being to patrol the sealed roads within the shire in his truck, repairing damage to the bitumen wherever he found cracks and pot-holes. If I couldn't find Margaret along the road or at Ross's, I'd go straight home to the 'Half-Way House' because I guessed that Ralph would have collected her and driven her home on his way back to Rokewood.

I'm embarrassed now to recall how my dilatoriness forced Margaret to trudge along the highway in all weathers. During much of that time she was pregnant, and her day had been as long and tiring as mine. *Mea maxima culpa!* That I was so appallingly inconsiderate of my pregnant wife makes me profoundly ashamed.

Our Mini-Minors

Our car speeding back and forth along the Shelford-Rokewood Road became a familiar sight to the families along the way. It was a cherry-red Mini-Minor that I'd bought new in December 1961. I wanted a reliable car to transport us the thousands of miles I knew we'd be driving. I chose it because it came well-recommended for its reliability and fuel economy. It served us well. In two years we clocked up 100,000 miles (160,000 kilometres) with few mechanical problems. We then traded it in on another, this time a sky-blue model, which we continued driving until we left Warrambeen for Papua New Guinea in early 1965.

Margaret learned to drive in the first Mini-Minor, and gained her driver's licence a couple of months after we'd moved into the 'Half-Way House'. One Saturday afternoon in Rokewood, we noticed that the police station was open. We went in to inquire of the policeman there, Constable Nijam, about how Margaret could obtain a licence. "Can you drive yet?" he asked. When she replied that she could, he said, "Let's do it now!" He directed Margaret to sit in the driver's seat and me in the back seat. He then sat in the passenger's seat. "Off you go down the main street," he said. He had her do a few left and right turns, then tested her on her reverse-parking skills. "That's good enough for me," he said, "so drive me back to the station and I'll issue your licence."

That was 60 years ago, and Margaret has held a current licence ever since. She's an excellent driver, has only ever had two accidents (one very minor), and has only ever collected one licence demerit point for exceeding the speed limit — 65 k.p.h. in a 60 zone. For the past 38 years she has driven her own car, while I've driven mine. We share ownership of both vehicles and drive both, but we each prefer driving our own. At present that means my 2011 Subaru 'Forester' and her 2014 Subaru 'Impreza'.

'Woolly' the lamb

Our first Mini-Minor caused us some amusement on one trip back to Warrambeen from Brighton, when we used it to transport a sheep. The sheep, a very large well-fed lamb called 'Woolly', had been a gift from Annie Earl.

Woolly had been a twin rejected by its mother. Annie had said, "It'll die unless it's bottle-fed; and I haven't got the facilities at home in Geelong for that, so will you take it?" It was very small and very cute, so I agreed. I took the lamb up to Brighton with the idea of it becoming a lawnmower as well as pet. The lamb and the family immediately bonded. Sister Helen became its special carer and bestowed the name Woolly upon it. She bottle-fed it; and within several weeks Woolly was no longer a runt but a lusty jumbuck-in-the-making. As in the nursery rhyme about Mary and her little lamb, everywhere that Helen went Woolly was sure to go. As soon as the back door opened a fraction, Woolly would barge in then scamper round the house searching for Helen. Everywhere he ran, he dropped his distinctive round pellet-like turds.

After about six months, Woolly began his lawnmowing duties, at which he excelled. Indeed he cropped the garden indiscriminately, munching his way through many of Mum's prized plants. The more he ate, the bigger and stronger he grew. Whenever he got inside the house, he'd send the furniture flying and strew his pellets around. Eventually Mum decided that he'd grown too big for a suburban backyard. He must be returned to Annie Earl's flock.

On our next trip to Melbourne we agreed to take Woolly back to Warrambeen. He fitted snugly into the space behind the Mini-Minor's passenger seat, where he nestled down amidst our luggage. When Margaret sat down, he bleated. He continued bleating intermittently during the two hours it took us to return home. Along the way, we had to call into a service station to fill the petrol tank. As the obliging young attendant unscrewed the petrol cap, he smiled at Margaret. She smiled back, and at that very instant, Woolly, who couldn't be seen, bleated loudly. The attendant jumped back astounded and stared at Margaret. She smiled back, and right then Woolly bleated again. This went on as he checked the oil and water then cleaned the windscreen. Each time he looked up, Margaret smiled at him and Woolly bleated. As we drove off, Woolly baaa-ing all the while, I could see the attendant in the rear-vision mirror gazing after us in amazement, trying to work out why this strange woman baaa-ed like a sheep every time she smiled.

After two hours in the Mini-Minor, Woolly had produced a half-bucketful of his pellets. As soon as I'd unpacked the car at Warrambeen, I had to sweep them out. They were everywhere — in the ashtrays, under the seats, in the side-pockets, beneath the floormats. Every time I cleaned the car after that I'd find more. I was still finding them a year later when we traded the car in on our second Mini-Minor.

Rosemary's arrival

Our most momentous event during our Warrambeen years was Rosemary's birth in the Jessie McPherson Private Hospital in central Melbourne in 1963. Margaret continued teaching at Newtown until Easter that year, when she was six months pregnant. She was then obliged to surrender her position because Education Department regulations prevented her from continuing in her job beyond that stage. Such was the lot of pregnant teachers in those unenlightened times.

Over the next couple of months we prepared for Rosie's arrival by equipping a spare room in our Shelford cottage as a nursery. We repainted the room, installed a bassinet, a cot and a nappy-changing table, bought an accumulation of baby supplies — nappies, baby

powder, lanoline etc — and decorated the room with bright children's pictures, mobiles suspended from the ceiling, rattles, teething rings, soft toys, toy blocks and picture books.

Margaret's obstetrician was Dr Frank Forster, one of Melbourne's leading specialists, who'd been mentor to our obstetrician-gynaecologist brother-in-law, Tom Roberts (husband of Margaret's older sister Penelope). Margaret had been regularly consulting Dr Forster during her pregnancy.

On the weekend before Margaret was due, we drove up to Melbourne to stay with her parents, who were then living in Sandringham. I had to return to my school, so early on the Monday morning, 17th June, I left her with them to drive back to Warrambeen. By arrangement with one of the parents, Audrey Marshall (who'd befriended us through attending the Shelford Presbyterian Church with us), as soon as Margaret began feeling labour pains, her Mum would phone Audrey, who'd then relay the message to me, because at that stage the school had no telephone connection. I'd only been back at the school for about half an hour when Audrey appeared at the door to announce that Margaret had begun labour and had been driven to the 'Jessie Mac'.

Audrey had already spread the message among the parents that I'd be returning to Melbourne post-haste so they should immediately come to collect their children. The kids, of course, were delighted to be having an unscheduled holiday. Audrey agreed to wait at the school until all the kids had been collected. She also undertook to ring Mr Buchanan, the inspector, to explain what had happened and to ask him to send a relief teacher on the morrow and to leave him at the school for the next week. Mr Buchanan duly made these arrangements, by which time I'd have been driving back up the Geelong freeway towards Melbourne.

I was so bemused by the events of the past few hours that I drove to the wrong hospital. Instead of the Jessie McPherson, I went to the Royal Women's Hospital, about a kilometre to the north in Carlton. After parking, I went to the reception desk and inquired about where I might find my wife, who'd been admitted to the maternity ward several hours earlier. "We have no Margaret Willis here. Are you sure she's in this hospital?" the receptionist asked; "Would she be in the Jessie McPherson down the road from here?"

At this point I remembered that that was where Margaret was booked in, so down to the 'Jessie Mac' I went. Within a few minutes I was inquiring after Margaret at the reception desk. I was directed to a ward on about the fifth floor, so I didn't wait for the lift but ran up the stairs to see Margaret and inspect our brand-new baby. To my surprise, Margaret was waiting for me at the head of the stairs, still very pregnant.

I sat chatting with Margaret for a couple of hours. The baby was still showing no signs of imminent arrival, so Margaret, who was getting tired, suggested that I should go home to my parents' place, where Frank Forster would ring me when our baby had been delivered. Back in those benighted days, husbands didn't accompany their wives into the labour ward to comfort and reassure them and to assist them during the delivery. That was accordingly a paternal duty and pleasure denied to us.

Rosie (the diminutive we soon adopted) was eventually born early the next morning, at about 4.00 a.m. on Tuesday 18 June. Margaret had been in labour for about 20 hours. Dr Forster called me several hours later to tell me this. He said Margaret was exhausted and sleeping, but it would be OK if I visited her and Rosie at about 10.00 a.m. I must have rung Margaret's parents to relate the good news; and I probably also rang Audrey Marshall to tell her, thank her and ask her to let the Warrambeen people know. Mum would have got on the phone to spread the word among the many kinfolk on our side of the family.

Next morning I went back to the hospital to visit Margaret and see Rosie for the first time. I wasn't allowed to hold Rosie yet but could only view her in her crib in a nursery on the other side of a glass partition. She had a shock of black hair, and her skin seemed

yellowish, an effect, I was told, of the prolonged labour she'd endured. I visited them daily for the week that Margaret remained in hospital. I then brought them home to my parents' home in Brighton, where we stayed for a several days before returning to Shelford to begin our life as a family.

Over the next few weeks various friends and neighbours visited us to bring gifts and see Rosie. One afternoon the Warrambeen Mothers' Club ran an afternoon tea for us at the school. They presented us with a sterling silver serviette ring with Rosemary's name engraved upon it. (Two years later they gave us another one, inscribed with Tony's name.) In thanking them, I made a little speech about how Warrambeen and its community would always retain a special place in our hearts. No matter where our lives and careers might take us in the world, Warrambeen would remain dear to us because that was where our family life had begun. Their warm smiles showed that they approved these sentiments.

Rosie grew rapidly. She soon graduated from the bassinet to the cot. Then she began sitting up and later standing in her cot, hauling herself erect by its bars. In no time she was crawling round our cottage, then using the chairs to steady herself as she began standing upright, and finally taking her first steps. By this stage we were feeding her in her highchair, and teaching her to feed herself with a spoon. Meanwhile she was being toilet trained and taught to sit on a potty.

All this was intensely interesting for me because that year I'd enrolled as an external student in the Diploma of Education course at Melbourne University. One of the subjects I was studying was Child Development. Rosie became on object lesson for me, validating what I was learning in my textbooks.

Occasionally Margaret would bring Rosie to the school. The schoolkids seemed fascinated by her. Many of them had baby brothers and sisters, but perhaps there was something exotic about Rosie. Margaret always kept her immaculately well-groomed and dressed in fresh, clean baby clothes, so whenever she left the house she looked at her absolute best. I don't think I'd ever seen anything quite as beautiful as my winsome baby daughter. Howard Ross thought much the same. "How on earth did a ratbag like you manage to produce something as beautiful as that baby?" he used to kid me.

Changed circumstances for Margaret

Motherhood imposed new strains on Margaret. Whereas I got out and about running my school, meeting the parents, collecting our mail and newspaper from the local general store and attending football practice in Rokewood on Thursdays, Margaret remained housebound. Occasionally Grace Ross would take her shopping in Geelong, or perhaps Audrey Marshall or Elvie Moloney would drop by for a cup of tea, but most days she was on her own at home caring for her baby and struggling to make do with the primitive facilities there.

Our water came from an underground well filled from the roof gutters. The water had to be hand-pumped into an overhead tank, from where it was gravity-fed to the kitchen, laundry and bathroom. Every couple of days I'd pump water from the well to the tank. One problem was that, being below ground, the water tended to become stagnant; however, there was a chemical the I used to pour into it every couple of months to prevent that. Our pan-toilet was uphill along a 15-metre path from the back door. Emptying the pan into a hole I'd dig behind the loo was one of my Saturday morning chores. The clothesline was an uphill walk from the back door, too. Daily hanging out nappies to dry on Shelford's bleak winter mornings was an ordeal. Some mornings the frosts were so severe that the condensation on the inside surfaces of our windows would be frozen when we awoke. We had no hot water service, so we had to heat water on the slow combustion stove in the kitchen. There was a bathroom with a wash

basin and a bath with a tap over each, but no water-heater. Hot water for our weekly baths came from a 5-gallon bucket which we heated with a heavy-duty electric infuser.

We had a laundry with a wash-trough, beside which we kept a small 'Hoover' washing machine. Margaret would wash the clothes in the 'Hoover', wring them out and rinse them in the trough, and then wring them again before hanging them on the clothesline. Washing and drying hadn't been so onerous while there were just the two of us; but Rosie and her insatiable demand for nappies, towels and fresh clothing greatly extended Margaret's working day. The small capacity of the 'Hoover' required that several tub-fulls had to be washed in relay.

One morning Howard Ross called in to see how Margaret was managing. He found her struggling with the washing. "Finish that load, then I'm taking you into Geelong to buy a new washing machine," he said, "because I need the motor out of that 'Hoover' for my workshop!" Margaret protested that we had no money for a new machine. Howard said he'd buy it for us and we could then repay him at the rate of £1 a week.

He then drove Margaret and Rosie into Geelong to the white goods store he dealt with. He bought us an automatic washing machine that could handle the volume of washing Margaret was now doing. The salesman he customarily dealt seemed surprised as 41-year-old Howard walked in not with Grace but with 22-year-old Margaret and Baby Rosemary in a pram. He plainly wondered if Howard was leading a double-life and Margaret was his extramarital interest. After bringing Margaret, Rosie and the washing machine back to Shelford, Howard installed the machine in our laundry, then took away the 'Hoover'. Thereafter, Margaret could do our washing in a fraction of the time taken by the 'Hoover'.

Many acts of kindness like that cemented our friendship with Grace and Howard. Sixty years later we remain deeply indebted to them. We could never hope to repay their enormous generosity and the efforts they made to help us settle in happily into our new home and become members of the Shelford community.

Shelford Presbyterian Church

During all our Warrambeen years, Margaret and I regularly attended the Shelford Presbyterian Church. There was a tiny Methodist chapel in the village, but services were held there only once a month on Sunday afternoons. The pastor was a young full-time unordained chap, a Home Missioner (as such people were known), who had responsibility for several other similar chapels in the district. We got to know him quite well, and he used to visit us, but we didn't affiliate with his chapel because we wished to attend weekly services. He was disappointed but appreciated our reasoning.

Almost inevitably, I was soon dragooned into Sunday School teaching and taking on the role of Sunday School treasurer. We got to know the Presbyterian Ministers well — two of these in succession — and on several occasions they had me conduct services and preach when they couldn't be present themselves. The congregation seemed to appreciate seeing a new face in the pulpit.

Attending the church was a good way for connecting with the Shelford community and making friends beyond the small circle of Warrambeen families. We got to know many other families, and that helped widen our social horizons.

The Shelford branch of the ALP

During my university years I'd become interested in politics. Almost inevitably, I gravitated to the 'progressive Left' and began voting for the Australian Labor Party (ALP). ALP supporters were a tiny minority among the families of the district, most of whom voted for

the Liberal-Country Party coalition parties. Several of the soldier settlers were Laborites, however, so in 1963 in the run-up to that year's federal election they formed a Shelford branch of the ALP. They saw Labor as more likely than the Liberal-Country Parties to further soldier settlers' interests. (Pigs, I suspect, were as likely fly as the ALP was to take any interest in such rural battlers!) I joined the party, too, and began attending the branch meetings. Only about eight of us were in the branch. We met by lantern light in the barn of one of the settlers somewhere up the Shelford-Mount Mercer Road.

My main contribution to the branch was to distribute how-to-vote cards outside the Shelford Primary School, where the local polling booth was customarily set up. Polling day, Saturday 30 November 1963, was miserably wet and cold. Handing out the cards for the Liberal Party was Richard Barber, the proprietor of the nearby historic 'Golf Hill' estate. Richard, ex-Geelong Grammar and about a year older than me, took pity on me. He invited me to sit with him in his car in between the arrival of the voters, who came intermittently, and few and far between.

Richard and I spent some time discussing the respective merits of the two main candidates for the Corio electorate, which Shelford belonged to. The sitting Liberal member was the popular veteran government minister, Sir Hubert Opperman, a former champion cyclist. Challenging him was the rising star of the trade union movement — Bob Hawke, who 20 years later became Prime Minister and still holds the record of over eight years spent as a Labor PM. Hawke achieved a 3% swing against Opperman, but was never likely to win.

Richard then started chatting about local history, in which we were both interested. It was a more congenial topic than politics, so we each shared what we knew about it. As a result, Richard and I became firm friends. He invited me to bring my pupils on an excursion to the 'Golf Hill' homestead to look over its historic features. We made the visit early the next year.

Howard Ross, a rusted-on Liberal voter, was appalled by my politics. Worse, I'd had the effrontery to declare them publicly by handing out ALP cards at the polling booth. Thereafter, our jocular political jibes at each other were always an ingredient in our badinage whenever we met. Years later, when the Liberal-Country Party coalition's time in government was running out, Howard told me he reckoned that federal politics would improve greatly if Bob Hawke were in parliament. "Well, Howard," I jested, "you missed your chance back in 1963, when you could have followed the how-to-vote card I gave you!"

An awakening sense of vocation

My historian's vocation became apparent to me during my Warrambeen years. While at the school I successfully completed a part time two-year Diploma of Education as an external student of Melbourne University. My main reason for undertaking the course was not a love of Education as a discipline but rather to gain a qualification to ease my transfer into the government secondary school system. All that time I was becoming more and more aware that I wished to become an historian.

What sparked my interest in studying more History was a conversation I'd had with Terry Bingley, the proprietor of the 'Warrambeen' estate. Except for his schooling at Geelong Grammar, Terry had spent his entire life on the estate. He told me that occasionally when he was digging out gravel for surfacing his roads he'd find stone axes in an old creek bed ***beneath*** the overlying basalt rock. This meant that Aborigines had been living there before local volcanoes like Mount Mercer and Mount Lawaluk had spewed forth their lava to bury the earlier landscape. Terry had a collection of prehistoric stone axe-heads from the ancient riverbed that he liked showing to interested visitors like me.

All this prompted me to wonder about the Aborigines who'd roamed the plains thereabouts for millennia before European pastoralists arrived in the mid-1830s. Wishing to know more, I joined the Geelong Historical Society. I'd drive into Geelong for the society's monthly meetings during my last year at the school, 1964. This was a deeply satisfying experience. I also began thinking about starting a MA in History at Melbourne University, with a thesis on the topic 'Aboriginal occupation of the Western Plains of Victoria'. As I now know, but didn't then, I would have been researching the Wathaurong people, more properly 'Watha-wurrung', a tribal language group whose domain occupied all the territory between the Bass Strait coast south of Geelong and the Great Dividing Range north of Ballarat. I hoped to begin this project in 1965, when I was supposed to be transferring to Norlane High School.

These were plans that never came to fruition because in January 1965 I went off to Papua New Guinea instead. I was posted to Brandi High School near Wewak in the Sepik District on a two-year secondment from the Victorian Education Department. As things turned out, we never returned to Victoria to resume our teaching careers because these took us elsewhere, to England and eventually Canberra. In the end I did complete MA and PhD degrees in History, but my theses were on Papua New Guinea topics not the Wathaurong.

A final reflection

In 1985 I participated in an ABC radio oral history series on bush schools. A historian friend of mine at the Australian National University, the late Professor H.N. ('Hank') Nelson (1937–2012), who co-ordinated the project, taped an interview with me. He later published the book that followed the series. It has the title *'With its hat about its ears': Recollections of the bush school* (1989). The book includes many direct quotes from my interview. Hank finished his book with one of my Warrambeen anecdotes:

> *I used to drive home from the school each evening. It was a soldier settlement area, and most of the houses were about 50 yards in from the road and about a mile apart. There were mail and bread deliveries so at each driveway there was an old milk can on a post. One boy was very small and I was his first teacher. He lived in the first settler's house up the road. I'd work back, and he got to know when I'd be driving home. He was so small he could curl himself up in the milk can. As I drove past, his hand and head would dart out. He'd wave, and I'd wave back. He went on to become a primary teacher himself.*

The lad was Shane Anderson, who is now age 66 and retired from teaching. Shane and I still keep in touch with each other. Hank didn't name Shane in the anecdote, but he observed that it illustrated something about our recollections of our bush school experiences. This was that 'the images recreated in the memories of the teachers and pupils are as gentle and engaging as a good bush school'.

Warrambeen was a good bush school. It served its community well. And my memories of it continue engaging me.

8. BRANDI

Our three years at Brandi High School probably began with a newspaper advertisement about August 1964. It would have appeared in a Melbourne newspaper, perhaps the *Sun News-Pictorial*; or possibly it was a notice in the *Education Gazette*. It invited teachers in Victorian government schools to apply for a two-year secondment to the Education Department of Papua New Guinea, starting in early 1965. I applied eagerly because I'd always wanted to visit PNG. Further, I was now free to go because my three-year bond with the Victorian Education Department was expiring at the end of the term.

I wrote away to the given address. A couple of weeks later I was summoned to an interview in the new Commonwealth Centre on the corner of Spring Street and Victoria Parade in Melbourne. The interviewer was a senior official of the PNG Department of Education, a genteel, kindly, middle-aged woman whose name I recall was Barbara MacLachlan. She seemed more interested in why I wished to teach in PNG than in my scanty teaching experience. She also asked what I knew of recent political developments there, including the establishment of the first popularly elected House of Assembly (parliament). She must have been sufficiently impressed by the way I presented myself because a couple of weeks later I received a letter from the PNG department telling me I'd been accepted and would be required to start work in early January 1965. Further correspondence with the Victorian department followed. This told me I'd been seconded to the PNG department for two years, with the possibility of a two-year extension. After that I'd be required to return to Victoria to teach wherever the Victorian department placed me.

By the time all this had been arranged, I was in my last few weeks of teaching at Warrambeen. The end of the year came with a rush. Soon we were packing up and vacating our cottage in Shelford, placing our meagre belongings in storage, farewelling our friends (mainly the Rosses, Marshalls, Moloneys and Bingleys), and then making our way back to Brighton to my parents' house. We stayed with them for about a week before my departure during the first week of January. Meanwhile the PNG department had sent me a plane ticket with instructions for travelling to Port Moresby, where I had to spend my first three weeks undergoing an induction course with about 50 other secondees from most Australian states. The plan was for Margaret and 18-month-old Rosie to fly to PNG a month later, after I'd been appointed to a school and given married accommodation. During that month Margaret stayed with her parents, who helped her prepare for her long journey north with the toddler Rosie and assisted with the sale of our Mini-Minor.

Port Moresby

I can't remember who drove me to the Essendon Airport for my departure, the first flight I'd taken since I was age 11 and in primary school. Perhaps Margaret drove, because she, Rosie and my parents were there to bid me farewell. If I remember correctly, it was Thursday 7th January. About ten of us Victorian secondees caught the same mid-afternoon flight of Trans-Australian Airlines, one of two domestic carriers. Among them I was pleased to meet a friend from Toorak Teachers' College, Ivor Salkin, whom I hadn't seen in almost three years. He was there with Pat and his three little kids, Vicki, Sean and Simon.

Nor can I recall much about the long journey north, except that it was slow and tedious. We changed planes in Brisbane, where we joined the contingents of secondees from the other states. The next stop was Port Moresby. We landed there at Jackson's aerodrome at about 2.00 a.m. the next morning, Friday. Clambering down from the aircraft to cross the tarmac,

we had our first experience of PNG — its astoundingly hot, humid climate. The sensation was akin to walking into and being swallowed by a wall of thick steaming blancmange.

After going through immigration and customs, we were loaded aboard a couple of buses then driven to our accommodation. The men were billeted at the 'Four Mile Club', a hostel for Commonwealth Department of Works employees. As the name suggests, Four Mile was four miles from the Port Moresby central business district. Most of the other residents, a hundred or more, were tradesmen engaged on various construction projects. The hostel was comfortable. It was two to a room, my roommate being Ian McRaild, a secondary arts-crafts teacher of similar age to me and from Victoria. There was a large communal dining room with cafeteria-style service and a separate bar, serving mainly bottled beer. Over the three weeks I lived there I got to know my fellow secondees well. Apart from renewing my friendship with Ivor Salkin, I made a lasting friendship with an older secondary teacher from Victoria, Matt Power (1919–2015).

Matt, who was 45, had served in PNG during the war with the 2/14th Infantry Battalion. The 2/14th was a unit of the 21st Brigade of the Australian 7th Division, 2nd AIF. He saw service in Syria, on the Kokoda Track, in the recapture of Lae, in the Markham-Ramu Valley campaign and finally at Balikpapan in Borneo, ending the war as a sergeant. At Isurava on the Kokoda Track in 1942, he took a bullet in the back, which remained lodged there for the rest of his life. At age 93, Matt returned to PNG to attend the opening of a memorial at Isurava on the Track in 2012. Matt became a secondary school headmaster in PNG, first at Lorengau High School on Manus and later at Kerevat High School near Rabaul; but like many other ex-PNG teachers he later settled in Canberra and taught in the government school system here. He was on the staff at Deakin High School, where he taught Tony History in Year 9. We socialised with him and his Malaysian wife, Bertha, until Matt retired and they moved to Mount Tamborine in Queensland — after winning a major lottery. Matt and I continued corresponding after that, until about 10 years ago, when his Christmas cards stopped arriving, and with them his letters. I guessed he might have died or been in full-time care. I found out later that he died in March 2015 aged 95.

During our first weekend in PNG, Ivor and I caught a bus from the Four Mile Club into Port Moresby. We wandered the town and went shopping. I bought a couple of pairs each of tailored shorts, short-sleeved shirts and knee-length socks — standard local 'white-collar' working attire we'd been told. With Ivor's guidance I also bought a camera, learned how to load the film, and began taking photos. Apart from that, we sat around at Four Mile getting to know our fellow secondees, drinking 'Merakis', i.e. 'SP' or 'South Pacific' lager that came in distinctive long-necked green-glass stubbies, taking in the exotic local social scene, and being amazed by the passing parade of Papua New Guineans, who probably came from most parts of the country. We also chatted to various permanent Four Mile residents, who mostly seemed to be heavy earth-moving equipment operators employed on major building sites.

On the Monday morning after our arrival a bus took us to the Ela Beach Primary school. This was on the southern side of the central business district and opposite a popular beach used by the 'expatriate' (European) citizens. We spent the next fortnight at the school undergoing an orientation course. Run by an amiable chap called Denis O'Donohue, a lecturer at the Port Moresby Teachers' College, it aimed to familiarise us with the country where we'd spend at least the next two years teaching. We listened to lectures by senior Education Department officials, the government anthropologist, and representatives of the various government departments. We also watched films and participated in discussions on the future development of PNG. All very stimulating. It enthused us for the teaching we'd soon be doing, which was probably the main purpose of the course.

During the lunch breaks we had sufficient time to swim at Ela Beach, where a coral reef lay just off-shore, about 50 metres out in waist-deep water. Among my first purchases were a

facemask and snorkel so I could explore the reef and marvel at the astounding variety of the corals and tropical fish. We also walked up the hill into the shopping and banking precinct. Outside many shops, Papuan women sat on the pavement, their wares neatly arrayed before them. They were selling their hand-crafted trinkets — shell, seed and glass bead necklaces, models of outrigger canoes with lobster-claw sails, little statuettes and masks carved from wood, 'galip' nuts incised to resemble stylised faces, and grass-skirts. I bought many such items, which made good presents to send to the folks back home in Melbourne.

At the weekends we went on various excursions. One day I joined a group that travelled up the Sogeri Road beside the Laloki River, past Hombron Bluff and the Rouna hydroelectric power station to the Sogeri plateau. We visited Sogeri High School and Owers Corner, the beginning of the Kokoda Track. Another trip was to the Bomana War Cemetery, where Matt Power found the graves of several of his comrades killed on the Kokoda Track. Ian McRaild contacted a friend at the PNG Administrative College, John Rumens, who'd taught with him at Numurkah High School in north-central Victoria. John arranged for us to take a flight in a light plane over the mountains north-east of Port Moresby. All went well until John's young daughter, who was sitting on my knee in one of the cramped back seats, vomited. I tried to comfort her and clean her, which meant that I did little sightseeing. Another weekend several of us visited Kwikila High School, 80 kilometres south-east of Port Moresby, where one of the secondees was being posted.

We also made several visits to Koki Market, the local produce market midway between Four Mile and downtown Moresby. The sights, sounds and smells there assaulted the sensibilities. These included scarlet spittle from chewing betel-nut spattered everywhere; banana-leaf-wrapped packs of sickly smelling fresh sago; roasted flying-foxes, huge stalks of bananas and plantains of unimagined varieties; 'cords' of 'brus' (native tobacco) twisted together; people smoking long roll-your-own cigarettes of 'twist' tobacco rolled in sheets of newspaper. All this was in addition to the mounds of '*kaukau*' (sweet potato), cassava, yams, pawpaws, pineapples, breadfruit, custard apples, soursops and the ubiquitous betel nut, with its associated catkins of 'pepper'. Papua New Guineans were milling around everywhere, buying, selling, visiting and socialising. I couldn't yet differentiate between their 'tribes' as I could later, but I could see they came from many districts. Nor could I hear what they were saying, but I guessed they'd be speaking dozens of languages as well as Tokpisin (Melanesian Pidgin) and Motu (the language of the Port Moresby area).

Despite the excitement of all these new experiences, I didn't greatly like Port Moresby. Over subsequent years I visited the town often but never warmed to it. It occupies a region of coastal tropical savannah where the natural vegetation is tall grass with widely dispersed, scrubby trees. It's one of PNG's most arid and dry places. It receives about 1000 millimetres (39 inches) of rainfall annually, mostly in the five months December to April. Wet or dry, it's hot and humid and during the long dry season it's dusty. For me, Moresby was mainly a place to be visited only because my university research took me there; and the sooner I could finish that and be gone the better. Nor did I greatly like the people I dealt with there, who were mostly the 'expats'. There was an old saying that they were either 'mercenaries, missionaries or misfits'. I soon recognised its germ of truth.

In the third week of our induction course, we began receiving our postings and, one by one, we departed to the schools where we'd spend the next year or two teaching. Ivor Salkin went off to the Police College at Bomana, Matt Power to Sogeri High School, and Ian McRaild to Lae High School. I was initially assigned to Kwikila High School, but I didn't wish to go there because I'd already seen it and hadn't been greatly impressed, either by the school or its location. Further, I very much wished to go to Brandi High School near Wewak in the Sepik District, because that's where my brother David was. He was the '*didiman*' (agricultural extension officer') at Angoram on the mighty Sepik River, 100 kilometres

south-east of Wewak. One of the other secondees was supposed to be going to Brandi, but he wanted to remain near Port Moresby. He agreed to swap with me. I then hurriedly arranged my flight to Wewak with the Education Department lest he change his mind.

I probably flew to Wewak about Thursday 28 January 1965. I don't remember how I got from Four Mile to Jackson's airport, but I suppose the Education Department arranged for me to be collected by the airport bus. I do remember that the trip to Wewak took much of the day. First there was the regular Douglas DC3 flight from Moresby to Lae, which probably took 1½ hours. I then had a three-hour wait in Lae for the flight to Wewak. I used the time to stroll to the southern, seaward end of the runway to take photos of the *Tenyo Maru*. This was a beached Japanese cargo ship which had run aground there in 1942 under attack by Allied aircraft. Only the prow was visible, rising some ten metres above the waves. (The ship eventually slid into the depths eight years later, while I was living in Lae.)

The flight to Wewak was on another DC3, but this time a 'side-saddle' model with canvas seats running lengthwise down the cabin. The plane was on the 'milk-run', which went first to Goroka in the Eastern Highlands, then Madang on the north-west coast, and finally to the Boram airport near Wewak. On the final Madang-Wewak run we passed Manam Island with its perpetual plume of smoke, the first active volcano I'd seen. We reached the Boram airport at Wewak about 4.00 p.m. As we approached the aerodrome, I was amazed to see that water-filled bomb craters pockmarked the entire coastal plain. They spoke eloquently of the savage war fought thereabouts 20 years earlier. From the air, Boram looked like the surface of a huge crumpet.

A Land Rover from the department's district office collected me from Boram and took me to the government headquarters buildings on the top of the Wewak hill. The department's district clerk, a surly and uncooperative chap notorious for his rudeness, was unwelcoming. He said he knew nothing of any arrangement for me to join the Brandi staff and didn't know what accommodation I could occupy there. He then pointed to a pair of young blokes on the far side of the room. "They're Brandi teachers here to collect the mail," he said, "so they can take you there." Thus, my three years at Brandi were about to begin.

First weeks at Brandi

The two chaps who met me at the district office were Ron Reisner and Ron Stanton, who'd both been at Brandi for about two years. Ron R., an English-Social Studies teacher, was a single chap who shared a house with Bill Stenning, an English teacher, on the top of the steep conical hill above the school. Both were graduates of ASOPA, the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Sydney, which trained teachers for service in PNG. Ron S. was a Science-Maths teacher who'd previously taught in northern New South Wales. He was married and had three preschool-aged sons.

On the drive out to Brandi, on the coast 13 kilometres east of Wewak, the two Rons gave me some background about the school. A former primary school established in 1952, it had become a 'higher elementary school' with Grades 7 and 8, but from 1963 it had been a junior high school. That is, the primary grades had been closed and henceforth students were admitted into Form 1 (Grade 7) with subsequent forms added each successive year, Form 2 in 1964 and Form 3 in 1965. Form 4 was added in 1967. Like most of PNG's high schools, it was a boarding school. The students came from villages across the Sepik District and lived in dormitories on the Brandi campus during term time.

Only three other teachers were in residence: Peter Stewart from Sydney, married with a toddler the same age as our Rosie, was the new Manual Arts (carpentry) teacher. Pat Vavine, a Papuan chap from near Port Moresby, also new to the staff, was the second Man. Arts teacher. David Pang, a PNG-born Chinese chap, was the Commerce teacher. The

Headmaster, Jeff Keast, was still in Queensland on leave and wasn't due back for several days. I would be the eighth staff member.

Because no accommodation had been allocated to me, I spent the first couple of nights in a spare room in the ancient 'native materials' house shared by Bill and Ron R. That evening, Bill, the two Rons and Ron Stanton's wife Margaret ran an impromptu party in the house. All they had to drink were two bottles of crème-de-menthe liqueur, which they drank neat, emptying both with my help. I eventually staggered off to my room wondering what hard-drinking companions I'd fallen among. I'd never tasted crème-de-menthe before; and I've never been able to drink it since. The very thought of it still makes me nauseous. I spent the weekend nursing a sore head. I also looked round the school, which still had no students because they hadn't yet returned from leave in their home villages. With Bill Stenning, I walked to the Brandi beach, about 500 metres to the north of the school. Because the monsoon winds were blowing, a powerful surf was rolling in. I had the first of my many hundreds of body-surfing swims there, catching the perfect waves that would keep breaking until the monsoon season waned in March.

The students began returning in dribs and drabs over the weekend, and continued arriving during the following week, ready for the new school year to begin the week after that. They were put to work cleaning and tidying the classrooms and dormitories. With the two Rons, I helped prepare the complex school timetable we'd follow.

Within a few days I was able to occupy the three-bedroom house I'd been allocated. It was a standard 'Queenslander' standing on 2-metre concrete stilts, with a 'boy-house' (domestic servant's accommodation) at the rear. It was among a group of three staff houses about 200 metres west of the central building of the school, on the other side of the main road running through the school campus.

The house was equipped with government-issue furniture. I soon discovered that the house also came replete with a 'houseboy', a young chap called Billy from the hill country inland from Turubu, a village about 12 kilometres to the east along the coast road. Billy lived in the boy-house with his wife Anna and young daughter Susanna. Billy's duties included cleaning the house and doing the laundry. Some house-boys also did the cooking, but we never got Billy to do that because he had a reputation for being an atrocious chef who burnt any meal he ever cooked. With Billy's help I was able to have the place ready for Margaret to move into. Meanwhile the Education Department had made her travel arrangements, and she was due to arrive in Wewak before the end of the month.

Margaret and Rosie joined me within about three weeks of my arrival at Brandi. It was a long, slow journey for them from Melbourne to Brandi. Margaret was three months pregnant with Tony; and Rosie was only a toddler of 19 months. They were utterly exhausted by the time they reached the Boram aerodrome, where I was waiting to collect them. We were overjoyed to be together again, even if in such an unusual and unfamiliar setting.

In the weeks that followed, they got to know the other members of staff and their children. Margaret cooked on the slow combustion stove, which also heated our water. She soon learned how to supervise and work with Billy, our houseboy, and became friendly with Anna, his wife. Rosie found a nearby playmate in Donna Stewart, her age and the daughter of Peter and Millie Stewart, our next-door neighbours.

Margaret was entranced by the exotic local vegetation. Our front hedge was of hibiscus and was usually ablaze with large scarlet flowers. A large frangipani in the front yard was often in flower. Pawpaws and bananas were growing near the back stairs. Mango and kapok trees grew nearby. Also near the stairs were ginger plants, which had spectacular, fragrant, cream-coloured flowers. One day Margaret tried out her Tokpisin on Billy. The conversation went like this:

> Margaret, pointing to the ginger blossom: *"Dispela samting em i wonem, Billy?"* (What is this thing called, Billy?)
>
> Billy, rolling his eyes at such an inane question: *"Misis, ol i kolim plaua."* (Mrs, it's called a flower.)

Unfortunately, at that stage she didn't have the mastery of Tokpisin for the follow-up question: *"Tenkyu, tasol em i wonem kain plaua?"* (Thank you, but what kind of flower is it?)

Before Margaret's arrival, I had bought a car. It was a third-hand well-travelled Volkswagen 'beetle', which was rusting out steadily and falling to pieces. It lasted me for almost two years before I sold it to a local motor mechanic for spare parts and bought a small two-cylinder air-cooled Toyota station-wagon early the next year. By the time we got rid of the VW the floor had rusted away. Seeing the road whizzing past beneath our feet was disconcerting, so I did running repairs with a sheet of plywood fixed in place with a spare steel bed-frame from one of the dormitories, all of which I securely bound in place with fencing wire. It continued serving us well, and remained in good mechanical condition even though the bodywork was rusting away to nothing. The rust problem was common with all cars in Wewak because the road surfaces were of 'coroness', crushed coral reef limestone dug from quarries near the sea. Being coral-based, coroness had a high sea-salt content. After rain, which was frequent, the road surfaces quickly became a salty slurry. This soon spattered all over vehicles, and unless hosed off thoroughly soon after, the salt started rusting the metal.

Facing my first class

My classroom duties at Brandi involved teaching the 'senior' classes — Form 2 English, History and Geography and Form 3 History and Geography. Each day's school began with an assembly on the grassed parade ground in front of the administrative building. The students lined up in class groups in school uniform, which comprised a blue laplap and white shirt with the school badge printed on the left-breast pocket in crimson. (In 1966 the uniform changed from blue laplaps to blue school-issue shorts after Jeff Keast obtained a job lot at knock-down price from Brother Salvias, a Hungarian monk who managed the Catholic Mission store at Wirui on Wewak's outskirts. Bro. Salvias, who had a great sense of humour, guaranteed every item sold. He guaranteed that his cheap wrist watches were 'mosquito-proof'; and his cut-price wedding rings were 'divorce-proof'.)

The assembly began when the Headmaster addressed the assembly from the veranda, which stood a couple of metres above the parade ground. Assembly over, the students marched to the classroom blocks, which stood end-on in parallel rows behind the administrative building.

The administrative building was of 'native materials'. It stood on 2-metre posts. The floors were rough-sawn timber planks, and the roof was of corrugated iron, but the walls and partitions were of woven bamboo with a ceiling of sago palm leaf thatch. The building contained the staff-room, the Headmaster's office, a store-room and a large assembly room, which doubled as a classroom and recreation room. At the back end were a couple of table tennis tables that were in continual use by staff and students alike when classes weren't in progress.

The administrative building was progressively falling apart. As we sat in the staffroom at night, supervising the evening study session from 7.00 till 8.30 p.m., we could hear the termites munching their way through the woodwork. Fine dust drifted down upon us continuously as various grubs consumed the *saksak* (sago) thatch ceiling. On one famous occasion, David Pang, the commerce teacher, disappeared from view while teaching a class. He plummeted to the ground two metres below when the floorboards gave way beneath him

mid-sentence. Apart from being shaken, David wasn't hurt. He walked round to the steps, climbed back inside the building and resumed teaching from a position where the floor seemed more substantial. Eventually, 1967, the building had to be demolished and replaced.

I taught my first class, Form 2A English, in the assembly room. It comprised about 20 boys, young men really, because most were in their late teens or perhaps even early twenties and probably only a few years younger than me. Form 2 had two classes: 2A, the 'academic' stream, which took History and Geography; and 2B, the 'practical' stream, which took Manual Arts and Technical Drawing.

As I entered the room, my students stood. "Be seated, boys," I told them. There was a shuffling of bare feet — no one wore shoes, sandals or rubber flipflops — as they took their seats. They looked at me silently but expectantly, as if wondering what I'd do next. I wrote my name on the blackboard, 'Mr Ian WILLIS', then turned to face them. "My first name is 'Ian'," I explained, "but you will call me 'Mr Willis'. Because you're Form 2A, I will be your English, History and Geography teacher. We will therefore see a lot of each other."

At this point I wondered if I'd made the right decision to teach in PNG because I couldn't tell my students apart. Looking from one to another, they all seemed to be identical — same brown faces, same black frizzy hair cropped short, same dark eyes, same broad noses, same full lips. How would I ever know who was who?

I began by going round the class asking them their names. Because they were Christians, baptised in their village churches by their priests and pastors, they all had European first or Christian names, but village second names, which for school enrolment purposes served as a surname. Among those I remember in the most senior class, Form 3, were Paul Yauli, Anthony Bais, Patrick Atet, Vincent Semberu and Peter Dika. The second name might be an individual name or it could be a father's name. For example, Vincent Semberu, used his own name as his second name but after going to the University of Papua New Guinea he used his father's name, Maragau, instead. As Vincent Maragau he became PNG's first ambassador to Japan ten years later. Similarly, Peter Dika (1951–2014) began using his father's name, Donigi, when he went to UPNG to study law. As Peter Donigi, he became a leading lawyer in Port Moresby, married a white woman and had six children, wrote a book on PNG's land law, lectured at UPNG and later served as a diplomat.

Learning their names and associating the names with the faces, and the height, breadth, facial profile and other characteristics, was the first step in getting to know them better. Within a few months I could even tell which part of the Sepik District they were from. Murik Lakes, Lumi, Ambunti, Aitape, Yangoru, Telefomin, Vanimo or Maprik? No problem! Their home regions were imprinted clearly in their features, and were as easily distinguished as, say, Scottish Highlanders and Calabrians would be in Europe.

I soon found that teaching them was a pleasurable alternative to being in charge of Third Formers in Australian high schools, who were notoriously difficult to manage — the most problematic of all six secondary levels. The Brandi boys were good-humoured, polite, deferential, and passive. No classroom management problems at Brandi, it seemed. They answered my questions readily, laughed at my jokes and enjoyed a lesson leavened with humour.

Jeff Keast

Jeffrey William Keast (1924–1990) was the Brandi headmaster during our three years at the school. I met him during my first week at the school, after he'd returned from leave. Aged 41, he was a Manual Arts and Maths teacher who specialised in teaching Technical Drawing. He had spent four years in the RAAF during the war and was a leading aircraftsman at his

discharge. He arrived in PNG in 1959 and initially taught at the Idubada Technical College in Port Moresby. He took over as the Brandi headmaster in 1963.

Jeff had a friendly, jocular manner, but maintained a discreet distance between himself and his staff. Away from the job, he didn't socialise with us but chose his friends from among the more senior public servants in Wewak, his great mate being the commandant of the local *kalabus* (prison) at Boram. Jeff's wife, Poppy, worked in the office of Burns Philp, a major PNG trading company and retail chain, in downtown Wewak and kept herself aloof from the other Brandi wives. They had two children living at home, Meryl and Ashley, who attended the Wewak Primary-'A' [Australian curriculum] School, attended mainly by European children. (Papua New Guinean children went to the Primary-'T' [Territory curriculum] schools.) Except occasionally at the weekend, Poppy and the children were not often seen by the Brandi community.

Few of the Brandi community ever visited the Keast residence, one reason being the Keasts' savage guard dog, 'Jack', an aggressive sandy-coloured Labrador. Jack needed little provocation to attack. Twice when I went to the house on school business, he charged down the front stairs and bit me before Poppy could call him off. The second time she said, "I don't think Jack likes you very much, Ian!", to which I responded, "I'm quite certain I don't like Jack at all, Poppy!"

Jeff ran a tight ship. Borrowing a phrase from President Sukarno in nearby Indonesia, he practised what he called 'guided democracy'. This meant that he made all the critical decisions, didn't consult his staff, and didn't conduct staff meetings. We nevertheless respected him greatly. We knew his office door was always open if we wished to discuss professional or personal problems. We also knew he supported us loyally — so long as we worked hard and gave our all to the school. He was fiercely protective of his staff in the face of the peremptory demands of Education Department headquarters at Konedobu in Port Moresby. He often fulminated against "Those peanuts at Konedobu!" when, without reference to him, the bureaucrats there made the wrong decisions about Brandi. For instance, on one occasion they sited the next classroom-to-be-built over a 10-metre wide, 3-metre deep water-filled bomb-crater in a low-lying, water-logged area of the campus.

Jeff was also a disciplinarian. He took no nonsense from the students. He peremptorily expelled those he regarded as troublemakers. He joked about this in the staffroom. "Where's Martin, that boy from Aitape in Form 2C?" someone might inquire; "He hasn't been in class for several days." "I awarded him the DCM at the end of last week," Jeff would respond. 'DCM' meant 'Don't come Monday' rather than 'Distinguished Conduct Medal'.

On one occasion I saved a lad from the DCM. His name was John Aris and he was from the Murik Lakes near the Sepik River mouth. I forget what his offence had been, but I must have thought he deserved a second chance because I pleaded with Jeff to let him remain at the school. Jeff relented. A couple of weeks later, John's old father, Aris, a famous woodcarver, came to our house with a present. It was a freshly carved 'tambaran' mask, for which the Sepik River villages are famous. "*Mi laik tok tenkyu tru long wonem you bin halivim John bilong me taim nambawan bilong skul i laik rausim en*." ("I wish to thank you sincerely for helping my John when the headmaster wanted to expel him.") Ever since then, the mask has occupied pride of place among our collection of PNG artefacts.

Keastian 'guided democracy' had its limits. As the staff grew, so did pressure on Jeff to conduct regular staff meetings and give his teachers a say in how the school was managed. He yielded reluctantly and monopolised the discussion when he held staff meetings, but at least the meetings gave us an opportunity of airing issues of mutual concern instead of muttering away behind his back. Margaret and I were somewhat amused to discover than when contentious matters were put to a vote, she and I usually voted on opposite sides.

Jeff became a good friend to both of us. It was he who had persuaded Margaret to resume teaching in early 1966. He had a vacant position for a Form 1 English-Social Studies teacher. By that stage Tony, who was born in August 1965, was only six months old, and Margaret was reluctant to leave him; however, Jeff arranged for Margaret Stanton to babysit him during the day, with his Mum popping across the road to check on him during the recess and lunch breaks. We kept in touch with Jeff for years after we'd both left PNG. He visited us once in Canberra and we in turn visited him in Brisbane.

Many years later, in 2013, Margaret and I and our friends Deirdre and Pieter Degeling contributed the following item about Jeff to an online chat group of former Brandi teachers:

> *We had the good fortune to be at Brandi in the middle to late 1960s, when the school was rapidly taking shape as one of the new high schools. They were some of the best years of our lives.*
>
> *Our Headmaster was the late great Jeff Keast (1924-90), an unsung hero in PNG secondary school development. He not only helped us grow up, but he was instrumental in establishing the school's enduring reputation.*
>
> *He was a great talent spotter, knew how to scrounge and effectively apply scarce resources, and gave us ample latitude but expected high achievement in return.*
>
> *We look back on these years fondly as being foundational for our subsequent professional careers. Our years at Brandi were rich and joyful. We made lifelong friends there among both staff and students, many of whom took leading roles in the post-Independence nation.*

Teaching English

I soon settled into my Brandi teaching routines. One duty was to begin writing a syllabus for each of my subjects. That was because at this early stage in the development of the PNG high school system there was no national curriculum. Unlike Victoria, where all schools taught the statewide curriculum ordained by the Education Department, in PNG we were largely left to our own devices.

We taught English as a 'foreign' or 'second' language, and so I soon learned the acronyms 'TEFL' (teaching English as a foreign language) and 'TESL' (teaching English as a second language). I knew absolutely nothing about either TEFL or TESL, but, guided by Bill Stenning and Ron Reisner, who'd studied these recondite disciplines at ASOPA, I did what they did.

Neither TEFL nor TESL were appropriate terms for English teaching in PNG. English wasn't really 'foreign' for any of the students because they'd been speaking it fluently since their early years of primary school. Nor was it a second language, because for most of them it was a third or even fourth or fifth language, after their home village language, perhaps a neighbouring language or dialect or two, and inevitably Tokpisin ('Talk-Pidgin': New Guinea Pidgin), the lingua franca for much of the Territory of New Guinea. Their first language was their local village vernacular or *tokples* ('talk-place' in Tokpisin), of which the present East Sepik Province has no fewer than 105 and the West Sepik 112. Readers here need to remember that PNG is the most linguistically diverse nation on earth. Some of these local languages might be spoken in just one or two nearby villages; others were more widespread, spoken in numerous villages. Linguistically, my students were far more sophisticated than me. Apart from English, I had a smattering of German and I was trying hard to learn Tokpisin, but I knew that no matter how adept I became I'd never be able to use it with their facility.

Lacking an English syllabus, I began producing my own, taking my cue from Bill and Ron. I covered noun and pronoun declension and number; comparison of adjectives and adverbs; case; mood; verb tenses; and direct and indirect speech. Using my typewriter, which

I'd shipped up from Melbourne, I spent much time writing up class exercises using language relevant to the students' daily lives. Taken together, they systematically took the students through English grammar, showing them how the language is structured, spelt and punctuated. Others liked what I was doing, so I shared it with them; and as new teachers joined the staff, they followed it too. Over the three years I was at Brandi it evolved into the Brandi English syllabus. Afterwards, I discovered that what I'd done at Brandi was called 'school-based curriculum development' in the educational jargon of a later era.

Again, following Bill and Ron I learned that my 'structure'-based approach required much oral practice to develop linguistic versatility. A productive approach was group recitation and repetition of the 'structure' being taught. For instance, a lesson about the present continuous tense in its affirmative-negative and statement-question forms might go something like this:

Teacher: "I am standing at the blackboard. What am I doing?"

Class: "You are standing at the blackboard."

Teacher: "Am I sitting at the blackboard?"

Class: "No, you are standing at the blackboard."

Teacher: "Is Paul standing at the blackboard?"

Class: "No, Paul isn't standing at the blackboard."

Teacher: "What's Paul doing? Is he sitting in his desk?"

Class: "Yes, he's sitting in his desk."

Before the lesson began, I'd have written a few sample sentences like these on the board, or I'd have run them off on the spirit duplicator. The samples would have summarised the structure of the present continuous in both its singular and plural versions, e.g. 'I am standing/You are standing/He-she-it is standing/We are standing/They are standing'. The next step would be to demonstrate its positive and negative contraction forms, e.g. 'You are/You're standing/ He is/He's standing', 'You are not/aren't/You're not standing, She is not/isn't /She's not standing' etc. And then the question forms, affirmative and negative, such as 'Are you going?/Aren't you going?' and so on and on.

After we'd drilled the structures orally, we'd discuss the composition, spelling and use of the present continuous — a verb tense (or time when the action happened) used to describe something happening right now, and composed of the appropriate part of the verb 'to be' plus the present participle, i.e. the verb form ending in '-ing'. Following such discussion, which might be spread across three or four lessons, there'd be some written exercises, in which the students would write their own sentences using given verbs like 'run', 'jump', 'swim', 'talk', 'clap', 'share' and 'hope'.

All this might seem patently elementary to native English speakers who've grown up speaking, reading and writing the language. That, however, wasn't necessarily so for students whose Papuan and Austronesian first languages differed radically from English, and who, moreover, probably most often spoke Tokpisin together when out of their teachers' earshot.

As well as its grammatical-linguistic emphasis, the Brandi English curriculum included essay-writing, dictation, précis-writing, oral expression and literature, in the form of short stories, plays, poems and novels.

Wherever possible, I'd choose material relevant to PNG and to their experience. One favourite poem was David Campbell's 'Men in green', which describes a RAAF pilot ferrying 15 soldiers to the Dobodura airfield in Papua during World War II:

Oh, there were fifteen men in green,
Each with a tommy-gun,
Who leapt into my plane at dawn;
We rose to meet the sun.

We set our course towards the east
And climbed into the day
Till the ribbed jungle underneath
Like a giant fossil lay….

After the plane has landed, the soldiers see the 15 men they're replacing:

… fifteen men in jungle green
Rose from the kunai grass
And came towards the plane. My men
In silence watched them pass;
It seemed they looked upon themselves
In Times's prophetic glass.

Oh, there were some leaned on a stick
And some on stretchers lay,
But few walked on their own two feet
In the early green of day.

All my classes responded positively to this poem. They were delighted to know that an accomplished Australian poet had written about PNG. They'd heard many stories from their parents and older village '*wantoks*' (someone who speaks the same *tokples*) about the war, which was still only 20 years in the past. It didn't matter that the 'men in green' were Australian soldiers rather than Papua New Guineans. Some students had relatives who'd fought in the New Guinea Infantry Battalion and other units of the Australian Army, and so they could readily empathise with the 'men in green'. Poems like this were a useful means of introducing my students to the elements of poetry — rhythm, rhyme, figurative language, versification.

Not leaving it at mere poetry appreciation, I encouraged my students to write their own poems and stories. I selected the best of their profferings for publication in *Kanimbieh*, the annual school magazine, which we produced for the first time in 1965. Because Jeff Keast knew I'd started my working life as a journo, he appointed me as the editor, a task I continued in 1966 and 1967 as well. The students loved seeing their writing in print; and so *Kanimbieh* became another medium for encouraging them to write creatively. (My old copies of the magazine have been an important source for this chapter.)

Oral expression was the most difficult subject to teach. Students didn't like being asked to stand to make a speech because they feared making themselves seem foolish. Shame was a potent emotion for them. If they felt they'd been shamed, they'd withdraw into themselves, drop their heads onto their desks and cover their heads with their arms, something like the proverbial ostrich burying its head in the sand. If that happened, I knew I'd lost the student and would get nothing from him for the rest of the lesson.

The way round that difficulty was to take a more subtle approach, for example by posing questions, often provocative, to which I'd ask them to respond. "Indonesia has taken over Netherlands New Guinea, just across the border from here, and is now calling it Irian Jaya," I'd say. "President Sukarno already calls PNG 'East Irian', so do you think the Indonesians should be allowed to take over PNG as well?" Questions like that were sure to stir them into vociferous speech-making. They hated Sukarno with a passion. They referred to him derisively as 'Sukarnopura', the name he'd recently chosen for the former Hollandia, capital of the previous Netherlands colony but now the new Indonesian province of West

Irian. (After Sukarno's removal from power in 1966, the town was renamed Jayapura. In 2002 the Indonesians renamed the province 'Papua', which shouldn't be confused with the former Australian territory of that name.)

History and Geography

In History and Geography we were expected to follow the New South Wales syllabuses, which of course focussed on NSW. Little of that seemed immediately relevant to PNG. Why study the physiography of NSW but not of the far more dramatic Sepik District? And why examine the effects of World War II on NSW, but not on PNG, where the war had been fought?

Geography wasn't as great a challenge as History. When it came to physiography, an abundance of practical examples lay around us in within eyesight — the land-building action of the coral reefs, the erosive effects of river and wave action, mountain-building through vulcanism and the folding and faulting of the earth's crust, soils and their productivity, vegetation types in relation to altitude, and the seasonal cycle of the monsoons and south-east trade winds. I never greatly enjoyed Geography teaching, despite having majored in the subject at university. As soon as I was able, I passed my classes over to another teacher, Pieter Degeling, an ASOPA graduate who joined the staff at the end of 1966. Pieter brought a new dynamism to the subject by exploring its economic and political aspects. Instead, I focussed on History because that had always been my first love.

But what history to teach? I couldn't get excited about the NSW History curriculum and the textbooks produced for its teaching. The latter were dry, sterile and dull. In my view, they seemed calculated to deter students rather than foster an interest in the subject. I couldn't expect Papua New Guinean students to be enthusiastic about the syllabus if I wasn't. I guess I taught them enough to pass the external exams in History set for students in Form 3. To help them do that, I probably designed model answers to exam questions such as 'Why did the British government grant self-government to NSW in 1851?', 'What effects did the gold rushes of the 1850s have on the population of NSW?', and 'Why did NSW join the new Australian federation in 1901?' I must have done that reasonably thoroughly because I recall that everyone passed.

Using the scanty resources available to me, mainly a few books about PNG by Australian authors that I scrounged, I began developing a course focussing on PNG history. The books I started with were Colin Simpson's *Plumes and Arrows: Inside New Guinea* (1962) and Gavin Souter's *New Guinea: The Last Unknown* (1963), each of which was an excellent introduction to PNG and its history. (Sixty years after their publication, they remain classics in the literature on PNG.) Broadly, the topics I included were the discovery of New Guinea by European mariners; the colonial partition of the island by the Dutch, Germans and British; the opening of the island to the outside world through the expeditions of various explorers; the establishment of the plantation industry; the coming of the Christian missions; the transition from British and German rule to Australian; the foundation and growth of the capital cities, Port Moresby and Rabaul; the League of Nations Mandate for the Territory of New Guinea, and subsequently of the UN Trusteeship; World War II and its impact; the establishment of local government councils; and finally representative government through the Legislative Assembly.

My school-based curriculum endeavours were welcomed by the Secondary Schools Inspector, Geoff Hodgson (1930–1990), who inspected Brandi in 1967. Geoff, who'd taught history in South Australia, was keen to see a national history curriculum developed in PNG. He drew together a network of history teachers who were doing similar things to me. He organised a three-day conference for us at the Goroka Teachers' College, to which he also

invited the members of the History Department of the newly established University of Papua New Guinea. He subsequently called us together in Port Moresby to plan a PNG-oriented history syllabus and write that year's PNG-wide external Form 4 History exam.

The contacts I made with the UPNG historians at the Goroka conference proved to be life- and career-changing. I got to know the Professor of History, Ken Inglis (1929–2017), and one of his lecturers, H.N. ('Hank') Nelson (1937–2012). For the rest of their lives they would be my friends, mentors and much-admired historians both at UPNG and later at ANU. In a conversation with Ken, I mentioned that if I hadn't come to PNG I'd planned to do a part-time MA preliminary course and then write a MA thesis in History at the University of Melbourne. "If you'd like to do that at UPNG," he promised, "we can arrange it." I took up his offer, and the very next year I enrolled in his department as a part-time external student. Studying that way, the MA prelim took me two years and the subsequent MA three years to complete. My MA degree, conferred in March 1973, was the first MA in History the university awarded. By the time I received it I knew that I wanted History to be my profession as well as vocation. That in turn eventually led me to Canberra and ANU in early 1975 to undertake a PhD in History. By then both Ken and Hank were at ANU, Ken as the Professor of History in the Research School of Social Sciences and Hank as a research fellow (later Professor) in Pacific History in the Research School of Pacific Studies. They were instrumental in my being granted an ANU PhD scholarship and continued advising me in the years they remained at the university.

The Brandi area abounded in source material to give the History classes a practical dimension. The school occupied the site of a former German coconut plantation. The Brandi Plantation had been established in 1912 by a chap called Herr [Mr] Boiker, who lived there with his family until 1920. That year his plantation was confiscated by an Australian government agency, the Expropriation Board, which had the task of removing plantations from German ownership then passing them over to Australian owners. Herr Boiker was deported. The incoming Australian owner was a chap called E.S. Eifold, who seems to have remained there until driven out by the Japanese invasion in 1942. The wartime bombing was so intense that Brandi and its neighbouring plantations, Moem and Boram, were utterly destroyed and not re-established in the post-war period. Boram became the airport, Moem an Army base and Brandi a school.

All that remained of the Brandi homestead at the war's end was a set of stone steps leading to what had been the main entrance. We found them buried in the jungle a couple of hundred metres from the school. After we'd cut back the foliage, we cleared away the leaflitter and earth to expose them. Apart from the steps, several ancient coconut palms survived the war. Most of them bore shrapnel scars, and some still had shards of metal embedded in their trunks.

And then, of course, there was the detritus of the war that had ended only 20 years earlier. It was all around us, mouldering away in the jungle and the kunai grass only metres from the school. The next section provides more information about it.

In producing a more relevant History syllabus I found two allies at the nearest secondary school to Brandi — St Xavier's High School on Kairiru Island, 25 kilometres north-west of Wewak. The school, which had opened in 1959, was run by the Marist Brothers, a Catholic teaching order which currently runs 35 schools, mostly secondary, in Australia. The two history teachers there were Bro. Andrew (civilian name Peter Morellini) and Bro. Phelan (Patrick Howley). They occasionally visited Brandi on their trips to the mainland for business at the Wirui Mission, the headquarters of the Diocese of Wewak between Wewak and Boram. I visited them on Kairiru several times, catching a Mission plane from the Wirui airstrip. We swapped ideas, shared teaching materials, exchanged our

students' essays so we could compare our marking systems, and planned common exam questions for our end-of-term examinations.

Both Andrew and Phelan, who each became good friends of mine, subsequently had highly successful careers in education. Andrew became the principal of Catholic secondary schools in the Solomon Islands and later at Madang. Phelan later became the St Xavier's headmaster and was subsequently the principal of the Passam National High School, 20 kilometres inland from Wewak. Passam, a government school established in about 1968, is one of PNG's six senior secondary colleges, which teach only Grades 11 and 12 and accept students from all over PNG.

The detritus of war

As mentioned, at Brandi the detritus of World War II was never far away. Stacks of unexploded shells and mortar bombs lay overgrown in the jungle several hundred metres from the school. Japanese helmets, boots, rifles and bayonets littered the forest floor. As the Brandi history teacher, I established a museum at the school to display the objects the students discovered — a searchlight, an anti-aircraft gun, bomb and shell casings, pistols, a hand-wound air-raid siren, and of course the rifles, bayonets, helmets and distinctive two-toed Japanese boots. That was 58 years ago, but the museum has survived. It's listed on various websites as a place to be seen by tourists during their visits to Wewak. As a teaching aid, the museum was a wonderful asset for the History teachers.

The headmaster of the Mandi Primary School, about two kilometres east of Brandi, made even better use of the discarded Japanese helmets than I did. His name was David Ament and he was an 'E-Course' graduate, that is a teacher given six months' training in Rabaul under the Education Department's 'Emergency' teacher training scheme introduced in 1960. The E-courses aimed to turn out several cohorts of teachers quickly during the early 1960s to staff the burgeoning Primary 'T' School sector. David quit PNG at the end of 1965 to return to Australia to train for the Anglican priesthood. An imaginative chap, he founded his own 'Cadet Corps' at Mandi. He drilled his boys in marching and saluting. Their uniform consisted of a white laplap and a Japanese helmet painted white. He'd retrieved sufficient helmets to equip his squad of 20 'Cadets'. On one occasion he marched the squad to Brandi to participate in our Cadet unit's weekly parade. Jeff Keast was aghast. "I hope the DC [District Commissioner] never hears about this," he exclaimed, "because if he does David could be facing charges of sedition for establishing a private army!"

The war in mainland New Guinea had formally ended near Wewak on 13 September 1945. That was when the commander of the 18th Japanese Army, Lieutenant General Hatazō Adachi, surrendered to Major General Horace C.H. Robertson, commander of the 6th Australian Infantry Division, which had retaken Wewak. The surrender ceremony took place at Wom Point, five kilometres north-west of Wewak. A small stone obelisk and plaque mark the place. In my time at Brandi, getting to Wom Point was difficult because the roads into the area were so overgrown you couldn't drive there. I went there once with another teacher, whose name I forget. (He wasn't at Brandi.) He loaned me his spare light motorbike so that we could get there by riding along the beach. Half-carrying the bikes across several creek mouths was difficult. We lugged them across one at a time. We took photos of the monument, then rode back to Wewak. I visited the monument again about eight years later, in 1973, but by then a good road gave easy access. If the site had been easier to get to during my Brandi years, I'd have wanted to take my History students there on an excursion.

During the war Brandi had been a Japanese military base camp with a hospital and a compound for Indian prisoners of war captured in Malaya and brought to PNG as slave labour. Allied aircraft had periodically bombed the area from about March 1944, but the

heaviest bombing occurred early on Friday 11 May 1945. The area around the present school was bombed by RAAF aircraft, shelled by RAN ships at sea, and also mortar-bombed by barge-borne mortar guns sailing in close to shore. The barges alone lobbed 700 bombs into the Brandi area. The bombardment was to soften up the Japanese in the area before 'Farida Force' (the Australian 2/9th and 2/10th Commando Squadrons) came ashore at Brandi Beach from nine assault landing craft at 8.30 a.m. to cut the eastern line of retreat of Japanese escaping the Australian assault on Wewak.

Only some of the bombs and shells detonated. Many buried themselves in the swampy soil near the school without exploding. On several occasions we called in the Army Bomb Disposal Squad to detonate unexploded bombs, and to remove caches of munitions we'd found in the jungle. The bombs were usually detonated *in situ*, where they'd been found. The stacks of munitions were carted away in an Army truck, shipped out to sea in a barge, then dumped into a deep marine trench several kilometres offshore from Wewak.

The greatest excitement with a bomb detonation happened one day in 1966 as a 1.5-metre trench was being dug across the school property for a water pipeline. The young English chap operating the trench-digging machine came into the staffroom that morning to ask if he could use the telephone. He said he'd been working about 600 metres to the west of the school when he heard his chain of excavation buckets strike metal. After clambering down to investigate, he saw that the machine had taken a few chunks from what was plainly a very large unexploded bomb. He was working on a contract with the Army, whose pipeline trench he was digging, so he wanted advice from the senior engineering officer at the Moem Barracks, several kilometres on the Wewak side of Brandi. The Army bomb disposal experts arrived soon afterwards. They declared that the bomb was a 2000-pounder which was too large to be removed and must be detonated where it lay.

The bomb squad members got to work straight away. They assured us that we were far enough away from the bomb not to be harmed; however, as a precaution all the louvre windows at Brandi — which was all the windows — should be set at the 'horizontal' position, which would enable them to withstand the shock wave from the explosion. When the detonation eventually took place, during the afternoon school session, I was teaching in one of the newer classroom blocks, which had louvre windows. Margaret was teaching in the old open-sided block, which had no glass windows, just an open space instead. The first we knew about it was an instantaneous bright flash as the shockwave distorted the light. Then a split second later we heard the sound — '***Kaaar-rooomp-ffaaa!***' "*Olaman!*" my students exclaimed simultaneously— literally, 'all the men', an exclamation of great surprise in Tokpisin, akin to 'Golly!' and 'Gosh!' in English. Margaret's class responded more demonstratively. They exited the room *en masse*, leaping out through the open windows to the ground about two metres below. One moment she was teaching her Form 1 class; several seconds later she was standing in the room alone. Within a couple of minutes, her students realised they were in no danger, so they sheepishly filed back into the classroom. As things turned out, the only damage caused by the explosion was to the two steel telegraph poles on either side of the bomb site. The blast had bent them over at 45-degree angles.

One macabre reminder of the war was the skeletal remains of two Japanese soldiers found at the end of a 10-metre tunnel in a cliff above the road on the western (school) side of the bridge over the Brandi River. No one knew about the tunnel's existence until a student work gang cut back the tangle of overhanging vegetation concealing it. They asked me what the tunnel was, so I crawled in to investigate. I found the skeletons side by side, as if the soldiers had lain down to die together. I recall that we reported the discovery to the District Commissioner, who arranged for the removal of the bones, but I don't know what then became of them. I hope they were returned to the Japanese agency that was retrieving the skeletal remains of fallen Japanese military personnel at that time.

The most bizarre and inexplicable discovery of all, however, was the rusted remains of about six pairs of ice skates that were unearthed by the trench-digger that found the 2000-pound bomb. A day or two after the bomb's detonation, the excavator was digging its way past the classrooms when the operator noticed these strange metallic objects being thrown onto the mound of earth beside the trench. After stopping the machine, he clambered down to investigate. He was amazed by what he'd found because although they were badly rusted, they were clearly ice skates. Each was replete with blade plus fore and aft stanchions for fastening the skates to boots. Seeing me teaching in the adjacent classroom, he came to the door. "Come and see what I've just dug up," he said. We all trooped out to look. The students had no idea what ice skates were, but he and I agreed that that was what he'd unearthed. After showing them off to the other staff and students, I placed them in the museum.

Meanwhile, there was much speculation about how half a dozen pairs of ice skates had found their way to tropical Brandi, which is only 3 degrees below the equator. The nearest permanent ice in New Guinea would have been the glacier on 4884-metre (16,054-foot) Mount Carstensz, 300 kilometres to the south-west in Irian Jaya; and the closest ice-skating rink would have been in Sydney. The best theory was that someone from Germany working on the Brandi Plantation before World War I, Herr Boiker for instance, had brought the skates with them. The skates could never have been used in Wewak, where the temperature rarely falls below 27 degrees (80 degrees Fahrenheit), so were eventually tossed into a rubbish pit. There they became buried and rusted away until resurrected half a century or more later.

Putting the bomb craters to good use

The large craters, usually water-filled, where the bombs had exploded were the most obvious legacy of Brandi's wartime bombing. Dozens of bomb craters dotted the swampy low-lying land between the school and the beach. The larger ones were eight to ten metres across and two to three metres deep. They were often choked with luxuriant growths of algae and were prime breeding sites for anopheline (malarial) mosquitos.

Twenty years after the war had ended, the bomb craters were serving a practical, peaceful purpose — the source of *kanggo* or 'Sepik spinach', a variety of water cress (*Nasturtium officinale*), the main green vegetable on the Brandi diet. One of the daily work parade tasks of a group of students, the 'green-leaf gatherers', was to clamber into a bomb hole then swim around harvesting enough 'spinach' for that evening's meal. Boiled like silver-beet or garden spinach, it was a tasty, cost-free, vitamin-rich food. The Brandi students consumed bushels of *kanggo* (the Tokpisin name) every week. The bomb craters provided an inexhaustible supply.

One Brandi achievement of which I'm still proud was to introduce tilapia fish to the bomb holes. My brother out at Angoram had told me about tilapia, which had been introduced to the Sepik River. I obtained a bucketful of fingerlings from the Boram Prison, the *Kalabus*, which was farming them; I then released them into all the craters I could find. An African species, tilapia are fast-breeding, tolerate poor water quality, improve the water quality by eating the algae, predate on mosquito larvae and grow rapidly to about 39 centimetres long and a kilogram in weight. The Brandi tilapia did all that and provided a welcome new food source for the students. If there are still bomb craters at Brandi and the students are hauling tilapia from them, they have me to thank.

In Australia nowadays, tilapia are regarded as vermin — a prolific invasive species. In the 1960s, however, they were considered a useful addition to local protein sources for Papua New Guineans. They spread into the Sepik from the Highlands, where they were being grown

in fishponds. By the time I introduced them to the Brandi bomb craters, they were widely dispersed in PNG. Vermin or not, they're still an important food source in PNG.

The weekly school routines

The Brandi day began at first light, always 6.00 a.m., when the students awoke, toileted, washed, cleaned their dormitories, then had breakfast in the dining room. Breakfast consisted of pancake-like 'fritters', a kind of fried wholemeal flour damper spread with vegemite and washed down with a mug of sweet black tea. The fritters had been mixed and cooked the afternoon before by a team of fritter-makers during work parade. Lunch was a bowl of boiled wholemeal rice and a serving of canned fish, typically the ubiquitous '777' ['Three Seven']-brand mackerel-pike in tomato sauce, a staple commodity in trade stores the length and breadth of PNG. The evening meal at 5.30 p.m. was another bowl of rice, a serve of canned bully-beef, a mound of boiled 'green-leaf', i.e. *kanggo*, and another mug of tea.

Morning parade outside the administrative block was at 7.30 a.m. That took ten minutes, followed by the first teaching session from 7.45 till 10.15 a.m., with three 45-minute periods. Morning recess was 10.15 till 10.45 a.m., followed by the second teaching session of two 45-minute periods, with lunch at 12.15 p.m. The afternoon session, two more 45-minute periods, began at 1.00 p.m. and ended at 2.30 p.m.

Following the end of each day's teaching, the students mustered for 'work parade', which lasted until 4.00 p.m. They were assigned to various tasks: cooking the evening meal and next morning's fritters in the kitchen; collecting and cutting firewood; sweeping the classrooms; cleansing the toilets and ablutions block; and gathering *kanggo* from the bomb craters. A few students were assigned to plum jobs. For instance, Johannes Wafingian from Yangoru was assigned to me as an assistant to maintain the museum; and Matthew Maiben from the Chambri Lakes was in charge of the medicine chest. Known as 'Doctor Matthew', he painted acriflavine antiseptic solution on cuts and scratches and applied Band-Aids as appropriate. Another, Bob Augui, conducted the Brandi shop, which sold various items the boys required (needles and thread, toothbrushes and toothpaste, sticking plaster etc). Someone else ran 'Radio Brandi', making announcements and playing music over the school loud-speaker system.

The majority of students, however, worked in the grass-cutting gangs. The grass grew so rapidly it had to be continually cut. That was done by lines of schoolboys advancing in rows as they swung grass-knives or *sarifs* to slash back the grass. The *sarif* (also *sarep*) was s simple scythe made from a 1.2-metre length of hoop-iron sharpened to a blade along its leading edge. At the top end it was doubled over for 10 centimetres to form a handle, which was then bound with cloth or tape so as not to cause blisters when being swung. Over successive years, the *sarif*-wielding students turned the tangled scrub around the school into lawns. For those not assigned to other duties, grass-cutting kept the students fit.

After work parade finished, the students had a couple of hours of free time until the evening meal at 6.00 p.m. Many of them fished in the Brandi River. Some body-surfed at Brandi Beach. Others maintained their own gardens in various odd corners of the campus. Some played table tennis, against each other or the teachers. And some strummed ukeleles and guitars, and practised in the 'string bands' they formed. Many were accomplished stringed instrument players. One of their all-time favourite songs was '*O sori Mama*', which one of them had composesd. The Tokpisin lyrics went like this:

Oh sori Mama,
Mi laik go si-kul Sepik.
Oh sori Mama,
Mi laik go si-kul Sepik.

Mi laik go si-kul Yarapos,
Mi laik go si-kul Kairiru,
Mi laik go si-kul Bi-ran-di.

Translated, it meant:

Oh sorry Mother,
I wish to attend a Sepik school.
[Repeated]
I wish to attend [Mercy Girls Secondary School at] Yarapos,
I wish to attend [St Xavier's High School on] Kairiru,
I wish to attend Brandi [High School].

'*O sori Mama*', which was sung twice because it only had seven short lines, listed the three East Sepik secondary schools. If the song were being written now, it would have to include many more. Since the mid-1960s another 15 government and mission secondary schools have been established in the East Sepik — at Passam, Maprik, Angoram, Ambunti, Yangoru, Polmalmal, Wingei, Dreikikir, Hawain River, Wirui (Bishop Leo Secondary School), Burui, Hayfield, Nagum, Dagua (John Bosco Secondary School), St Andrew's (between Wewak and Wom) and Wewak Grammar School (at Boram). And that's only in the East Sepik. In the West Sepik at least nine secondary schools now operate, at Aitape (separate government and Catholic schools), Lumi, Telefomin, Oksapmin, Green River, Nuku and Vanimo (separate government and Catholic schools). Despite the proliferation, the Brandi string bands could have accommodated them all by adding new lines and verses.

Dinner was served at 6.00 p.m.; and after that came 1½ hours of supervised study time, 7.00 until 8.30 p.m. The supervision was fairly lax. The two teachers rostered for supervision each evening sat in the staffroom catching up on lesson preparation. The students worked in the classrooms completing homework assignments and doing revision. If any of them needed assistance, they went to the staffroom to talk to one of the teachers.

We all had to be careful moving around the campus during study time because of the risk of treading on a snake. We accordingly carried battery-powered torches with us at night. The outside lights attracted clouds of '*binatangs*' (flying insects), which attracted frogs, which in turn attracted the snakes, commonly death adders (*Acanthophis antarcticus*).

The students were terrified of snakes. I guess they'd seen enough cases of village people dying after being bitten while walking through long grass to know to stay clear of venomous snakes of any kind.

On one memorable occasion I had to despatch a death adder. This was one afternoon during work parade while I was in the staff room correcting essays. Suddenly I heard a great commotion outside at the far end of the administrative building. Going outside to investigate, I found a ring of about a dozen students yabbering in excitement. At the centre of the circle was a metre-long death adder, coiled with its head raised, ready to lunge at anyone who came too close. The boys had disturbed it while cutting grass nearby. Apart from whooping and gesticulating, they didn't know what to do next. Almost instinctively, I grabbed a *sarif* from the nearest boy, stepped forward and with one swipe severed its head. I was quite the local hero for a few hours afterwards as the news of my derring-do spread. What did we do with the decapitated snake? I guess we dug a hole and buried it.

Margaret had her own encounter with a death adder outside our back door one evening when she went outside to drop some rubbish in the garbage bin. Mid-step, she realised a snake was curled up on the doormat. She would have trodden on it, but, seeing it in time, lengthened her stride and succeeded in stepping right over it. Startled, the snake wriggled away under the house. Another of her snake stories is about the time she was teaching in the classroom nearest the road. Glancing outside, she saw a group of villagers marching along the

road chattering loudly and excitedly. Two of the men were carrying a long pole on their shoulders. Coiled round and tied to the pole was an enormous writhing python. Midway along its length was a large bulge, probably its last meal and perhaps a piglet.

Weekends were largely free time for staff and students alike. After breakfast and early morning dormitory inspection on the Saturdays, the students could use their time as they saw fit. The majority spent the day walking to and from Wewak, 13 kilometres along the coast road to the west. There they shopped in the trade stores, went to the movies in the barn-like cinema, visited relatives and *wantoks* in the 'Compound' (the 'native' housing precinct), and strolled round the produce market. Some spent the time at the beach. A few of the Sepik River boys had carved their own dug-out canoes, in which they plied the still waters of the river. Others spent the time in their garden houses, where they feasted on the *kaukau* they'd grown. The more venturesome explored the jungle, discovering wartime trophies which, when cleaned, would be displayed in the museum. In the evenings, a priest from the Wirui Catholic Mission visited the school to hear confessions in advance of mass on the morrow.

Much the same happened on Sundays, the main difference being that most students attended church services during the morning. The '*Popi*' ('Popey': Catholic) boys attended an early-morning mass in the assembly room, conducted by a priest from the Wirui Mission. Later in the morning it was the turn of the '*Talatalas*' (Protestants). They attended a service run by an Assemblies of God pastor. The school subsequently appointed two chaplains. Father William T. Liebert SVD (1929–2011) for the Catholics and Pastor Charles R. Short (1925–2017) of the Assemblies of God for the Protestants.

Church-attendance was a problem for Brandi's teachers. The few Catholics went to mass at the Wirui Cathedral if they were churchgoers, but as that was a Tokpisin service for Papua New Guineans, they didn't feel comfortable there. Several of us Protestants attended a monthly Anglican service in the Wewak courthouse conducted by a priest who flew up from Madang. We could have gone to an Assemblies of God service in Wewak, but that was Pentecostalist and therefore decidedly *outré*.

The Brandi students took an interest in our religious affiliations. On one occasion I inadvertently caused some Catholic-Protestant friction among the students. One of the Protestant students, Bill Mininyigi, a genial and popular chap nicknamed 'Soldier Bill', started telling his Catholic classmates that they ought to pay attention to what Mr Willis said because he was a good *Talatala* and knew that the *Popi* religion was based on erroneous teaching. News of this made its way to Father Pat O'Reilly, the head of the Catholic Education Office at the Wirui Mission. He came out to the school to investigate. There was a meeting between him, Jeff Keast and me, at which I explained that I wasn't in the habit of proselytising and had never discussed religion with any of my students or any of my classes. Soldier Bill had been doing the proselytising, not me.

One of the more ardent Catholic students was a chap called Augustus Wagumbio. His nickname was 'Africa', because the other students thought he looked more like a Kenyan than a Papua New Guinean. Augustus used to get into arguments with Pieter Degeling, who'd spent several years in a Catholic seminary and still claimed to be a Catholic although not a church-attending one. Augustus used to accuse Pieter of being a 'skin Catholic' —Catholic on the outside but inwardly a non-believer.

Partying

For the Brandi staff, Saturday evenings were 'party night'. Most Saturday evenings one or another of the staff members ran a dinner party for select guests. Sometimes several dinner parties would be going on simultaneously. Alternatively, someone would run an open-house party for all-comers. Apart from reading, listening to the radio or music on the stereo sets

we'd all bought from one of the Chinese trade stores in Wewak, there was little else to do but party.

The open-house parties were often attended by townspeople from Wewak. 'Territory-style', these were usually hard-drinking events, with copious quantities of beer — five or six cartons of stubbies — and a dozen bottles of wine consumed over a four-hour period. The guests would bring more. The beer was inevitably 'SP', though if Jeff Keast were attending a thoughtful host would provide a dozen Queensland 'Fourex' ('XXXX'-brand) stubbies because he wouldn't drink anything else and referred to 'SP' contemptuously as 'kaffir-beer'. The wine we drank was usually 'Blue Nun'-brand *Liebfraumilch*, a sweet white table wine from the German Rhineland. We bought our grog at the Burns Philp store in Wewak. 'BP's' or 'Beeps', as it was known, had never heard of Australian wine and stocked only *Liebfraumilch* and *Nuits-St-Georges*, a heavy red wine from the Burgundy region of France.

Margaret and I threw one memorable party midway through 1966. To help us run it, we had Peter Lewis (1938–2015) staying with us for the weekend. Peter, an E-course graduate of my age, was the teacher at Balik Primary School, 12 kilometres east of Brandi. He'd become a close friend and often stayed with us at weekends. About 70 people rolled up for this party — all the Brandi staff, and various friends from town, as well as others we didn't know.

One of the blokes who turned up was a *kiap* (government patrol officer) from an outstation who was in Wewak for the weekend. We'd never met him before, but he was brought along by Don Macaulay, the District Agricultural Officer for the Sepik and my brother David's boss. A large, arrogant fellow, he spent much of the evening stirring up the other guests and letting it be known that he despised teachers. He boasted of having been a Commonwealth Games pole-vaulter. Perhaps he had been, but his bulk and braggadocio made me sceptical. He was resentful when he sensed I doubted him. After about 11.00 p.m. the other guests began departing, but the *kiap* seemed determined to stay on. When Don Macaulay left, the *kiap* said he'd find his own way back to Wewak. Eventually he was the last remaining partygoer, with only Margaret, Peter and me still present. He sat there drinking beer after beer, as we cleaned up after the party. He made no sign of making ready to go. Instead he sat there sullenly, becoming ever more inebriated and offensive.

He was also spoiling for a fight. What he seemed to want was for me as host to tell him to be gone, which would have been the signal for him to throw me bodily through the window, followed by Peter, after which perhaps he'd force his attentions upon the hostess. Peter and I began making plans for such an eventuality. The idea was that we'd get him standing up, whereupon Peter would creep behind him and crouch, I'd push him backwards over Peter, and then we'd smack him on the head with an empty wine bottle. We hadn't worked out what we'd then do with him. Perhaps if things had gone according to plan, we'd have dragged him down the driveway and dumped him at the foot of the huge *yar* (casuarina) tree at the corner with the main road, where he could sleep it off then hitch a ride back into town. Fortunately this stratagem wasn't necessary, because at about 1.00 a.m. the hostess intervened decisively with an ultimatum. "I didn't invite you here; and you're unwelcome," she said. "If you're not gone from this house in one minute, I'll phone my friend Ted Hicks, the District Commissioner, to tell him that one of his *kiaps* has invaded my home and refuses to leave!"

The mention of the DC was inspired! The nearest phone was 300 metres away, locked in the headmaster's office, but the *kiap* didn't know that. Margaret's bluff worked wonders. Our purported pole-vaulter responded with a gold medal-winning performance. He leapt up, terror writ large across his face, as if he'd just found himself sitting on a powder keg with the fuse burning short. (*Kiaps*, we realised, lived in awe of the DC, who was their boss and the arbiter of their professional fate.) He was out the door in a flash and disappeared down the driveway into the night. I have no idea how he got back to Wewak, or even if he ever did, but

thankfully we never saw him again. Over 45 years later I read a journal article he'd written. It was a self-glorifying account of a patrol which he, the intrepid *kiap*, had led to some remote, hostile and previously uncontacted village. He later published other self-congratulatory material in which he portrayed himself as a swashbuckling Lothario in the grand tradition of Errol Flynn, the Hollywood film star whose notorious exploits in PNG in the late 1920s were legendary.

As we staff members partied of a weekend, unbeknown to us some of the students also partied. They concocted their own 'moonshine', a lethal mix of water, *muli-wara* (lemon juice, from the bullety lemons of the 'bush *muli*' or wild lemon tree), sugar nicked from the kitchen, and methyl alcohol purloined from the drum of spirit-duplicator fluid in the school stationery store. When Jeff Keast discovered what they were doing, he had the walls and ceiling of the store clad with steel mesh, transforming it into a burglar-proof cage. He padlocked the door and kept the key himself. And instead of clear, colourless duplicator fluid, he ordered a drum of fluid that was stained bright purple. Thereafter, any student who'd been imbibing moonshine could easily be detected by the purple staining round his mouth and on his tongue. Purple mouth and tongue would have resulted in an immediate DCM.

Sport

The main sport played at Brandi was soccer, because it was the form of 'kick-ball' that the Catholic missionaries had introduced to the villages. The missionaries were mostly German, Austrian and Dutch priests of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD, using its Latin initials), a missionary order founded in the Netherlands in 1875. Brandi had various age-graded soccer teams that competed against each other. The senior team played in the town competition in Wewak. At this stage, other football codes, basketball, cricket, tennis, hocky and netball hadn't made their way from Port Moresby as far north and west as the Sepik.

During my first year, I got the bright idea of introducing 'Aussie Rules' to Brandi. At much the same time, my friend Bro. Andrew at St Xavier's on Kairiru was introducing the code there. The code is now known as 'AFL' (Australian Football League) and is Australia's premier spectator sport, but in those days it was called 'Australian Rules' to distinguish it from soccer and rugby. I obtained a 'Sherrin'-brand football from somewhere then called a meeting for those who might be interested in playing. Enough students turned up for me to form two teams.

After I'd explained the players' positions and the elementary rules, and we'd placed goal posts — poles cut from the nearby bush — at either end of the school oval, we played a scratch match there the next afternoon. They took to the game as if they'd been playing it all their lives. They were 'naturals' at it. The students had all the agility, speed and ball control skills of veteran players, and they quickly worked out game tactics. To show them what a top-grade match looked like, I obtained a film of a recent VFL (Victorian Football League) grand final, which I showed on the school projector. They loved it. In subsequent games they were applying the lessons they'd learnt from it.

Our first match against an outside team was against Bro. Andrew's St Xavier's lads. This came during a sports exchange visit Brandi made to Kairiru later in the year. A boat load of us sailed across to Kairiru to spend two or three days in sporting contests — swimming in the St Xavier's pool, running races and soccer matches. The main event on the program was the Aussie Rules contest. I don't recall who umpired it, but perhaps Bro. Andrew did. It attracted much interest, with the staff and students of each school crowding around the boundary to cheer their respective sides on. Who won? I don't remember, but it was probably a close-fought contest that left both teams feeling satisfied with their performances. It was the first of the annual Brandi-St Xavier's matches played during subsequent years.

During my last year at Brandi, 1967, a group of us AFL enthusiasts established a Wewak competition. There were only four teams: Brandi, Army, Wewak and Wirui Mission. I played with the Brandi team, and so did the Papuan chap who was running the Mandi Primary School. Our captain was John Harungu, who was also the Brandi head prefect that year. The football season was short. Each team had played all the others twice, so the 'home and away' games took six weeks to complete. The final series took another three weeks. The standard of the football was fair, about that of a minor bush league in rural Australia.

In the grand final, Brandi played Army, who won convincingly. Army had the advantage of being able to field about eight young Education Corps sergeants, National Servicemen, who'd all played top-level footy in their home states before being conscripted. We lacked the skills, size and bulk of the Army players. We weren't disgraced, but we were no match for them. And for the first time in my footballing career, I was badly thumped. The young chap responsible, a boy of about 16, was the son of the Protestant chaplain at the Moem Barracks. For whatever reason, he decided to target me. He shadowed me for the whole game, bumping me hard whenever he could. I couldn't complain because it was fair play; nor did I retaliate because vengeance was never a motive for me in the way I played footy. In any case it would have been undignified for a man of 29 to be grappling with a lad in his mid-teens. As I approached my 30th birthday, I realised I wasn't as nimble as I'd been when playing for the Rokewood-Corindhap 'Grasshoppers' four years earlier. After the match I spent a week recovering from the bruising he'd given me.

Edith Macaulay née Hatt

Brandi's first female teacher joined the staff about the end of term 1 in 1965. This was Edith Hatt from Melbourne, who'd graduated from ASOPA in 1960 and had four years' PNG teaching experience. Edith had grown up in Kew, where she'd attended Methodist Ladies' College. She joined the Brandi staff as its first full-time specialist Maths teacher.

Edith became the ninth staff member. The others were Jeff Keast, David Pang, Ron Reisner, Ron Stanton, Bill Stenning, Peter Stewart, Pat Vavine and Ian Willis — me. I don't recall that Edith lived on the Brandi campus; perhaps she was given accommodation in Wewak, and drove out to the school each day. Being an attractive, young, single and unattached female, she soon had swains from near and far competing for her attention.

Early the next year she announced her engagement to Don Macaulay, the aforesaid head of the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries (DASF) in the Sepik. They had a large wedding in Wewak a couple of months later. She asked Margaret to be her matron-of-honour because by that stage they were Brandi colleagues. Margaret had joined the staff at the beginning of 1966 to fill a gap for a Form 1 English and Social Studies teacher. All the Brandi staff were invited; and Edith's Dad came up from Melbourne to 'give the bride away' — 'Who bringeth this woman?', as the Anglican wedding liturgy used to say.

After that, the students were never quite sure what to call Edith. She was probably addressed as all three of 'Misis Edith', 'Miss Hatt' and 'Mrs Macaulay'. Edith quit Brandi at the end of 1966 when Don was transferred to the Northern District. We met again some seven years later during my last weeks in Lae at the PNG University of Technology ('Unitech') in 1973. As I was about to depart Lae for a year's sabbatical leave in the UK, Edith joined the Unitech teaching staff as a Maths lecturer, so I guess that Don had recently become the DASF head in the Morobe.

Kumbaringa

In the meantime, Edith has featured prominently in one of Margaret's all-time favourite PNG stories. The story involves Kumbaringa, a '*lapun tru*' (very old man) from nearby Maur village, about a kilometre east of Brandi on the other side of the Brandi River.

Decades earlier, Kumbaringa had been a *luluai* or government-appointed village head man. When we knew him, he was probably in his mid-80s. By then he was a tiny, skinny little wrinkled chap who stood only about 5 foot 1 inch (155 centimetres) tall and was far gone into senile dementia. Despite that, he retained much of his earlier dignity. He liked to dress smartly in the European-style, which meant, button-up shirt, tailored shorts and belt, knee-length white stockings, sandals and a straw fedora-style hat. The problem was that most of his clothing was several sizes too large for his shrunken bony frame. His stockings, kept up by garters, drooped around his skinny shanks, and his shorts and shirt could have accommodated two chaps his size.

Kumbaringa, who was illiterate, fondly imagined that he could write. He'd probably been born about 1880, years before the Germans claimed New Guinea as a colony. He'd have remembered the establishment of the Brandi Plantation; and he'd have been a young married man with children when the Australians ousted the Germans and took control of the Territory in 1914–1915.

Kumbaringa visited Brandi often. He'd wander into the staff room and would sit down at whatever desk had an unattended typewriter. He would then type away happily for an hour or more, typing row after row of gibberish. He also liked pretending to be a student attending lessons. He obtained one of the school-issue exercise books and a pencil. He'd wander into any class, take a seat up the back, open his exercise book and begin writing page after page of his favourite scrawl, which was always the same — line after line of inverted 'V' shapes, thus: ⩓⩓⩓⩓⩓⩓.

The students enjoyed having Kumbaringa in class. They said he was '*longlong*' (mad), but they regarded him with affection, and he became something of a mascot for them. He caused no disruption for them or us teachers, so we let him sit up the back of the room studiously scribbling away in his exercise book.

Kumbaringa used to upset Edith, however, so if he wandered into one of her Maths classes, she'd tell the boys to eject him. He'd then find another classroom where he was more welcome.

It so happened that one day Margaret was teaching in the same twin classroom block as Edith. The classrooms were configured in such a way that the blackboards in each classroom faced each other, with an open walkway between the two rooms. A teacher standing at one blackboard could see the teacher at the other blackboard at the opposite end of the building. This day Kumbaringa appeared in the walkway mid-period. After looking from one room to the other, he opted for Edith's class rather than Margaret's. Edith was having none of this, so she told the two biggest boys to evict him. Kumbaringa wasn't cooperating, however, and struggled against them. Eventually they picked him up and tried to rush him out the doorway feet first. Each time they did, he'd spread his legs and plant his feet firmly on the door jambs on either side. After several failed attempts at ejecting him in the forward position, they finally got him outside by carrying him out backwards.

It wasn't only Brandi that Kumbaringa liked visiting. He frequented various primary schools as well. Another of his haunts was Christ the King Cathedral on the Wirui Mission campus near Wewak. When he was there, he liked sitting on the bishop's throne. Too bad for Bishop Leo Arkfeld if he entered the cathedral and Kumbaringa was already enthroned! He'd simply have to find another seat. On one famous occasion, however, Kumbaringa wasn't on

the throne but was stretched out on the high altar. He was lying there on his back in cruciform position and refused to be moved. I can't say how the hierarchy dealt with that one.

Kumbaringa liked reminding us Australians that he had a generally low opinion of us and our homeland. One of his favourite tricks was to pull a 2-shilling coin from his pocket. He'd turn it over to the Australian coat of arms, which had a kangaroo supporter on the left and an emu on the right. He'd point out the kangaroo and derisively say, "*Emi sikau bilong Australia. Emi samting nating. Sikau bilong Niugini i winim!*" ("This is an Australian wallaby. It's of no consequence. The New Guinea wallaby is superior.") The he'd point to the emu and say, "*Emi muruk bilong Australia. Emi samting nating. Muruk bilong Niugini i winim!*" ("This is an Australian cassowary. It's of no consequence. The New Guinea cassowary is better.")

One day Jeff Keast got even with Kumbaringa after he'd strolled into the staffroom. "*Kumbaringa, lukim hia!*" ("Kumbaringa, look here!"), Jeff called out, summoning the old chap into his office. There on his desk was a small *muli*, a bush lemon. Beside it was a huge pomelo (giant grapefruit) measuring some 25 centimetres in diameter and weighing about a kilogram. "*Dispela emi muli bilong Niugini. Emi samting nating!"* said Jeff, pointing to the *muli*; "*Nau dispela emi muli bilong Australia. Mi tingim olsem muli bilong mipela i winim muli bilong yupela!*" ("This is a New Guinea lemon. It's of no consequence. And this is an Australian lemon. I think our lemon is better than yours!") Kumbaringa just shook his head in disbelief. He couldn't understand how *mulis* could come so large.

Kumbaringa died in 1968, the year after we'd left Brandi. The students mourned for him and wrote obituaries for him in that year's edition of *Kanimbieh*.

Expanding enrolments and staff numbers

Brandi grew year by year. When I arrived at the beginning of 1965, we had about 150 enrolments. That almost doubled in 1966; and in 1967 we had over 400. To keep up with the expansion, we had to employ more and more staff. The school also experienced continual staff turnover. For example, Bill Stenning returned to Sydney at the end of 1965; and that was the last any of us heard from him.

In our second year at Brandi, 1966, Margaret joined the staff as an English and Social Studies teacher at the beginning of the year. So, too, did two young ASOPA graduates: Stirling Henry, who taught English and History, and Paul Somerville, who taught Science and Maths. A couple of months later, Max Medcalf, a chap in his mid-30s arrived from Picton High School, south of Sydney, as Bill's replacement in the English department. Pat Vavine moved back to Moresby midyear and was replaced by Nalden Matautu, a chap from New Ireland. Maureen Lee Sye joined the staff as a Home Economics teacher, but she only stayed for a couple of terms because her husband was transferred to Lae. By the end of 1966 we had a staff of 12 full-time teachers.

At the end of that year Ron Stanton transferred to Goroka High School; he was replaced early the next year by Brian Pell, an Agricultural Science teacher from Victoria. Edith Hatt/Macaulay also departed, to Popondetta High School; and so did Peter Stewart, to Mount Hagen High School. David Pang left to take up a job with the Department of Trade and Industry in Port Moresby. Four recent ASOPA graduates arrived at the end of the year to take up duty at the beginning of 1967. They were Pieter Degeling, Chris Batterham, Adrian Hughes and Carol Thomas.

Very early in 1967 these newcomers were joined by two female teachers, Cathy Burrows and Eleanor Kenneally, who arrived in Wewak accompanying husbands posted there. Cathy taught English and History; and Eleanor taught Home Economics. Ian McRaild, my roommate from the Four Mile hostel at the beginning of 1965, arrived after two years at

Lae High School to succeed Peter Stewart as head of Manual Arts. Alan West, an ASOPA graduate, joined the staff as head of Maths; and Ugia Nawia from Daru came to join Ian and Nalden Matautu as the third member of the Manual Arts department.

Further turnover occurred during 1967. Max Medcalf departed for a lecturing position at Goroka Teachers' College. Stirling Henry went off to Port Moresby to become a Research Officer Grade II in Education Department headquarters at Konedobu. 'Our man in Moresby!' Jeff Keast henceforth called him. Pieter Degeling succeeded David Pang as head of Commerce; and he took over Geography from me. Pieter's wife, Deirdre, also joined the staff as Jeff's office assistant. A trained nurse, she also had responsibility for overseeing the students' health. And Frank Rawcliff, a former Director of Education from Sabah in Borneo, joined the staff as Stirling's replacement. He subsequently succeeded Jeff as the Headmaster. By the end of the year we had 18 full-time staff members.

All the staff members had their own tales to tell. Cathy Burrows, for instance, was a champion sky-diver with a tally of over 300 parachute jumps. She was married to Keith, a builder, who later trained as a pilot and subsequently flew for an international air-freight company. Cathy was very modest about her parachuting accomplishments but had already published a book about her experiences. On one social occasion a couple of Army commandos were bragging about their parachuting exploits. Joining the conversation, Cathy asked how many jumps they'd made. They said they'd each jumped about twenty times then asked her why she wanted to know. She replied that she'd done some jumping herself. Guessing she might have made two or three jumps, they patronisingly asked how many. When she said 'over 300' they promptly found other people to talk to.

I guess Brandi's experience of staff turnover was similar to that of all the other PNG high schools. PNG attracted the footloose and the mobile. Teachers came and went, rarely staying more than two or three years as they pursued career opportunities wherever these turned up. During their time at Brandi they worked hard at their teaching duties and extracurricular activities aimed at developing the school under Jeff Keast's 'guided democracy'.

As staff numbers grew, so did friendship groups. We found that 'birds of a feather flocked together'. A group of us with 'scholarly' interests emerged and socialised together. Of necessity, we maintained friendly relations with all our fellow teachers, but those we associated with most closely were Max Medcalf, Paul Somerville, Stirling Henry, Pieter & Deirdre Degeling and Brian & Val Pell. They became lifelong friends. We kept in touch with them for decades and still occasionally see some of them. They all subsequently did well post-PNG. Here's a summary:

- Max married a fellow Goroka Teachers' College lecturer, Faith, and they had a son, Rory. Max later lectured at ASOPA. Sadly, we lost contact with him after we left PNG. I haven't yet been able to determine if their son Rory is Professor Rory Medcalf, the China expert and head of the National Security College at ANU. When I have the time I'll contact him via his ANU email address to see if that's who he is.

- Paul Somerville went on to the University of British Columbia, where he graduated with a PhD in Geophysics. While undertaking post-doctoral research at the Tokyo Earthquake Research Institute, he met and married Noriko. They settled in Los Angeles and had two sons, Michael and Jason. Paul subsequently became an eminent figure in the international Geophysics fraternity. Among many other accomplishments, Paul is the Chief Geoscientist for a consultancy firm, Risk Frontiers, in which capacity he undertakes seismic hazard analyses for the design and analysis of major dams, buildings, bridges and power generation facilities in many countries. He also spent several years as

Professor of Geophysics at Macquarie University in Sydney. Paul now divides his time between Los Angeles and Sydney.

- Stirling Henry (1944–2016) spent nine years in Port Moresby after Brandi. He married Rita from Marshall Lagoon and had three daughters, Tanya Kate, Natasha Tamara and Nadia Stirling. In 1977 they moved to Canberra, where Stirling had been headhunted for a senior position in the Schools Commission. Meanwhile, Stirling and Rita had spent a year in London while he completed a MSc degree in Economics at the London School of Economics. Later in Sydney he completed a law degree. During the eight years they spent in Canberra 1977–1985, Rita organised the annual PNG Independence Day dinner-dances, gala events conducted by the PNG-Australia Friendship Association. After Stirling had worked for a while as a senior official in the Department of Immigration, they moved to Turramurra in Sydney because Stirling had founded his own highly successful immigration consultancy firm.
- Brian and Val Pell returned to Victoria after their time at Brandi. Brian became a senior lecturer at Longeranong Agricultural College, then vice-principal at Glenormiston Agricultural College and later principal of the Burnley Horticultural College. Finally, he was Assistant Director Administration of the Victorian College of Agriculture & Horticulture. They had three daughters, Catherine, Rosalie (born in Wewak) and Sandra. They settled in Box Hill in Melbourne. Val volunteered for many years in the kiosk of the local hospital, for which she was eventually awarded an OAM.
- Pieter and Deirdre Degeling had a daughter, Simone and a son Chris, both very smart. (Both earned PhD degrees, Simone from Oxford in Law; and Chris, a veterinarian, in the History and Philosophy of Science.) After two years at Brandi the Degelings moved to Port Moresby when Pieter got a job teaching at the Administrative College. A couple of years later they moved back to Sydney. Pieter completed a PhD in management theory, focussing on the role of the PNG District Commissioners. He subsequently became an authority on the management of major health systems. Meanwhile, Deirdre became an expert in, and author of books on, health promotion. Pieter was appointed to a chair in Health Administration at the University of NSW; and they later spent four years in the UK after Pieter had been engaged as a consultant and analyst in health system management at the University of Durham. They retired to Burrawang in the NSW Southern Highlands, but eventually moved back to Sydney.
- Peter Lewis wasn't a Brandi teacher, but he spent so much time with us at weekends that he became a part of our friendship group. After we'd left Brandi, he married Marian Allaby, a young English volunteer with the UK Voluntary Services Overseas scheme who was teaching at Yarapos. They were married in the Turubu Catholic Church by Peter's friend, the local priest, an elderly German. It was the first wedding between Europeans that the priest had ever conducted in over 40 years as a missionary. Peter and Marian later moved to West New Britain, where Peter ran a vocational school and Marian taught at the Kimbe Primary 'A' School. (Her pupils there included my brother David's two older children.) Their next move was to Port Moresby, where Marian became a senior administrator with the International Education Agency, helping coordinate PNG's international school sector. They settled in Highfields near Toowoomba in Queensland in 2002 after Marian was appointed to a lecturing position in the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland. When Peter died from prostate cancer in 2015 at the age of 77, I lost one of my oldest and dearest friends.

The Brandi Girls' School

About 500 metres west of Brandi on the main road to Wewak was another school — the Brandi Girls' School, founded in 1963. It was essentially a government primary school teaching girls in Grades 5 and 6; however, it also had Grade 7 girls who lived at the school but attended Form 1 classes at the high school. Each year, a new secondary level was added as the girls moved up a class. By our last year, 1967, they had reached Form 4.

The Girls' School was structurally separate from the high school and had its own headmistress, Lilian Whitchurch from Tasmania. Lilian was assisted by Neri Eremas, a Tolai from Rabaul. Midway through 1965 Neri married Austin Sapias, a journalist and fellow Tolai. Margaret, a skilled dressmaker, helped produce Neri's wedding dress, which was made at the Girls' School. Austin later became the PNG High Commissioner in Canberra, and his son attended Deakin High School with our son Tony.

Neri was replaced by a woman from Kerema whose name I forget. Lilian departed at the end of 1966 to retire to Tasmania. Her replacement was a Mrs Quinlan. The Girls' School and high school staff had little to do with each other, either professionally or socially. The former stayed at their school teaching Grades 5 and 6 and were rarely seen at the high school. The high school girls used to walk between the schools each day. In our last year at Brandi the Girls' School enrolments reached 102, 39 of whom were attending classes at the high school.

The girls were a welcome presence at the high school. They were serious, diligent students, always polite, cooperative, and anxious to excell. Two of them, Nini Mandawa and Ruth Paiove, later followed Margaret and me to the University of Technology in Lae, where they each became secretaries in the departments employing them. Another I remember with affection was Camilla Yanmari (now Tamme), a Sepik River lass who became Head Girl at the high school in 1967. She has remained in contact with my brother David's family.

The relationship between the two Brandi principals, Lilian and Jeff, was usually tense. Lilian was forever ringing Jeff with complaints. He probably sighed with relief when she retired. He got on much better with Mrs Quinlan, whom he'd known earlier in Port Moresby. During our last year at Brandi two young white female teachers moved into the teacher accommodation at the Girls' School — Carol Thomas, who taught at the High School, and Sian Clarke, a Welshwoman, who taught in the primary section.

A near riot

On one famous occasion in late 1965, Lilian Whitchurch indirectly became the cause of a near riot at the high school. She had a complaint about the raunchy love letters several boys at the high school were sending her girls. Without discussing the matter with Jeff, she took her concerns to the police, who came to the school to investigate. Forewarned, Jeff absented himself. He drove off to spend the afternoon at the Sepik Club, leaving us his staff to deal with the matter.

When the police arrived, about eight of them in two Land Rovers under the command of an inspector, an English chap who was new to the police force. Bill Stenning and I handled the situation as best as we could because we were the only staff members present. This is no criticism of our colleagues, but they seemed conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps they were engaged in duties elsewhere, but by not coming to the staffroom they effectively passed to Bill and me the unwelcome task of dealing with the police. We asked the inspector why his squad had come to the school. He tried to make light of the matter by saying we had some sex maniacs among our students. Defensively, we asked what he proposed doing — making arrests, taking the alleged offenders in handcuffs to the Police lock-up? He showed us several

letters that Lilian had passed on to the police. Little subtlety about them: they were nothing if not sexually explicit! He then said his men would inspect the students' belongings to find further incriminating evidence.

We warned him that if he tried going through the dormitories searching the boys' suitcases and kitbags, he'd soon have a riot on his hands. He nevertheless persisted with his plan and demanded our cooperation under pain of arrest for obstructing the police in the execution of their lawful duty. Under sufferance, we gathered the students together as for an assembly, told them that the police officer wished to address them, then handed over the assembly to him. He briefly explained the nature of the visit, then instructed his policemen to begin searching the first dormitory. As the police entered the dorm, the students' mutterings of protest became more vociferous. They began making the "Whoop! Whoop! Whoop!" war-cry of their warrior ancestors — a sure sign that hostilities were about to begin. "They're going to riot," we yelled at the officer; "and we won't be able to control them. It'll be you eight policemen against 150 fired-up students!" He could see we were right, so he sent his deputy into the dormitory to call off his men. Between us, Bill and I restored calm. "Inspection's over!" we shouted. "The police are going back to Wewak now!" With a semblance of calm restored, the police withdrew, and drove back to Wewak. Before they departed, the officer said he'd be taking the matter further. As it was time for work parade, we sent the assembled students off to their scheduled duties.

Jeff appeared on the scene a couple of hours later as work parade was ending. "What happened?" he asked, somewhat shamefaced, as he entered the staffroom. He said that while he'd been in the Sepik Club he'd met the police inspector, who'd gone there for a few soothing ales after his exertions at Brandi. The inspector told Jeff that his students had nearly rioted, which he'd forestalled by making a strategic withdrawal. He also observed that Jeff had a couple of 'hostile' staff members, 'especially that chap Willis'. Bill Stenning had disappeared by this stage, perhaps to work on assignments for the correspondence BA degree he was completing at the University of Queensland. That left me to outline the afternoon's events to our headmaster. Without saying so directly, I let Jeff know that I thought he'd let down his staff by running out on a problem we lacked the authority to manage. Jeff brushed aside this complaint with a wave of his hand. "If the police want to come here and cause trouble, I can't stop them," he said; "so it's their problem not ours."

That was only one of two occasions when I disagreed publicly with Jeff. The other was two years later and over his savage dog, Jack. By now I was the officially designated 'Assistant Headmaster' and, as such, carried some responsibility for what happened at the school. It so happened that during one work parade a gang of grass-cutters was trimming the lawns around the Keast house with their *sarifs*. Jack had a bad reputation for attacking and mauling schoolboys who went near the house, so he was usually kept locked up during work parades. On this occasion he somehow escaped and attacked the nearest boy, tearing a hole in his forearm. The lad was one of our '*mankis*' — a small, slight Form 1 boy. His name was John Simogun and he was the son of Sir Pita Simogun (1900–1987), a wartime hero and one of the Sepik's best known Papua New Guinean residents. After escaping from Jack, John came to the staffroom to ask Deirdre Degeling to cleanse and dress his gaping wound. As soon as I saw what Jack had done, I rang the police. "We have a mad, savage dog rampaging round the campus attacking people," I explained. "Please take action before someone is killed!"

The police arrived soon after to 'arrest' Jack. They went to the Keast house first. Jeff had meanwhile returned home from Wewak, where he'd been attending to school business. He was able to persuade the police that everything was under control. After they'd gone, he came storming down to the staffroom, where several of us were still working. "Who called the police?" he demanded. I said I'd done so in my capacity as Assistant Headmaster. When

Jeff asked why I replied that Jack had attacked and injured Pita Simogun's son. I went on to say that a dozen little children were now living on the campus and we their parents were fearful lest Jack should savage one of them. Further, we thought it irresponsible of the Keast family to let their ferocious dog roam free. Jeff had no answer, so he shrugged, turned on his heel and walked out.

But back to the near riot of 1965…. There were repercussions, because the police inspector had mentioned the matter to the Education Department's chief representative in the Sepik District — the District Education Officer (DEO). Several days later the DEO came to the school to address the students in the assembly room. In a towering rage, he tore into them. He pronounced them to be a disgrace to the school, to the Sepik, to PNG and their Christian religion. He then dramatically read out some of the more innocuously mawkish passages from several of the letters: *"Oh, my darling, I lie awake in the dormitory at night wishing you were here beside me; and if you come to me now I will give you 100% kisses all over your body!"* and so on and on. The harangue ended with the promise that if the letter-writing didn't cease, he'd expel the perpetrators forthwith and send them back to their villages in disgrace. It was an impressive display of confected moral outrage.

I can't recall if the letter-writers were ever identified or punished. In any case, the matter was soon forgotten. Perhaps the DEO's threats had the desired effect, because there were no more complaints about lovelorn Brandi boys propositioning the schoolgirls by mail.

Things didn't end quite so well for the DEO himself. Two years later he ignominiously disappeared from Wewak overnight. He was, as things turned out, a predatory serial paedophile. If he were driving to visit an out-of-town school, his habit was to collect several boys from one of the primary schools near Wewak to accompany him. His excuse was that he was 'giving them a day out'. This practice was discovered after he'd made the mistake of taking some boys from a Catholic school. What he'd done with them emerged later from the confessional. The priest who'd heard the confessions informed Bishop Leo Arkfeld, who was a pilot and flew his own plane on mission business. Bishop Arkfeld is said to have flown immediately to Port Moresby to protest to the Director of Education. The Bishop gave the Director an ultimatum. "Get rid of the Sepik DEO immediately or I'll take this matter to the highest authorities possible — Administrator, Prime Minister and the UN Trusteeship Council!" he reputedly threatened. The DEO, who'd been a PNG Education Officer for 20 years, was on a plane out of PNG the very next day. We later learned this from David Pitt (c.1935–2001), the replacement DEO, who'd helped the DEO pack up. We subsequently heard that the former DEO had found a job as the Director of Education in one of the newly independent East African nations. His reputation couldn't have preceded him or he mightn't have been appointed to such a position.

Tony's arrival

For Margaret and me, by far the most important event in all our time at Brandi was the birth of our only son Tony in the Wewak Hospital on Boram Point on Tuesday 24 August 1965. The hospital was relatively new. Opened in 1962, it replaced an earlier post-war hospital on the same site. Boram Point was a promontory of elevated coral jutting into the sea between Wewak Point to the west and Moem Point to the east. Recuperating patients had superb views along the coast and towards the mountainous hinterland. A hospital in a very different setting to the ancient inner-city one in which Rosemary had been born 26 months earlier!

During the last stages of her pregnancy Margaret had been under the care of Dr Robert Barnes, District Medical Officer for the Sepik. He was a jovial chap in horn-rim glasses with a shock of grey hair. He had a cheery word for everyone as he rode around the wards on a kids' bike. Continually walking from one end of the hospital to the other made him footsore.

As he did his rounds, he'd pull up outside a ward, park his bike against the wall next to the door and then visit his patients.

Margaret and I remember Tony's birth very differently. She recalls that when the time came for me to drive her to the hospital it was the evening of Monday 23rd. She thinks that we left Rosie in the care of my brother David, who was staying with us at the time. She says that Tony was born at 5.00 a.m. the next morning with Dr Barnes present for the delivery. She also remembers that conditions in the labour ward were 'shambolic', with poorly maintained and broken equipment.

My memory is otherwise. I don't recall David being with us. I remember that we drove to the hospital on the morning of the delivery, leaving Rosie with our next-door neighbour, Millie Stewart. I had hoped to be with Margaret during the birth, but 'Barnesy' was having none of that. When I made to accompany Margaret into the labour ward, he ordered me out. "Go back to Brandi," he said; "we'll call you when it's time to come and visit you wife and new baby." I meekly obeyed. After several hours back at the school, perhaps mid-afternoon, I received a message from the hospital announcing that Margaret had given birth, and that I could now visit her.

Whichever memory is correct, we were both delighted by our baby boy, who was born with a thatch of coppery red hair. (It fell out over the next few weeks and was replaced by a fuzz of downy pale blonde hair.) We'd already agreed that we'd name him Anthony James — Anthony after my best mate, Tony Irvine; and James because that was a name passing from father to son down the Willis lineage for over 150 years. After admiring my son and thanking and consoling my wife because of her ordeal, I returned to Brandi. The neighbours were waiting for me, eager to know whether the baby was a boy or a girl, and anxious to know how Margaret was.

In the five days that Margaret remained in hospital, she had numerous visitors. This made us deeply sad for the older woman sharing her ward. She was the wife of a captain at the Moem Barracks and had just lost her baby. It was her first and must have been keenly anticipated. During the delivery, however, it had strangled on its own umbilical cord. She seemed to receive no visitors; and so all the joyful visitors coming to see Margaret, and the showing off of her baby, could only have accentuated the poor woman's disappointment and grief.

When we brought Tony home, the visitors and the gifts kept coming. Margaret had prepared his bassinet before she'd left for the hospital. At the head of it I'd printed a card saying, 'This is a future St Kilda premiership player', which caused some amusement. (Ironically, he never played AFL, though his son James did.)

In mid-December we travelled back to Melbourne for the 6-week end-of-year school vacation. Tony was a great hit everywhere we went, especially with his Willis and Vale grandparents, aunts and uncles and various cousins. We visited Warrambeen to show him off among our friends there. The Mothers' Club presented him with a silver serviette ring with his name inscribed, matching the one they'd given Rosie in 1963. We also had him baptised in the Male Street Methodist Church by the Rev. Ivan Blake, who'd married Margaret and me and had baptised Rosie.

Child-minding arrangements

After we returned to Brandi from leave, Jeff Keast persuaded Margaret to return to teaching. He needed a Form 1 English-Social Studies teacher. Margaret was the ideal choice. Not only was she a qualified and experienced teacher, but she already lived on-campus and wouldn't need to be provided with separate accommodation. For similar reasons, the District Education Officer and Education Department approved. As well as on accommodation, there'd be

savings on leave fares. Before Margaret would agree, however, satisfactory child-minding arrangements had to be made. Jeff took care of that. He arranged for Margaret Stanton to care for Tony during teaching sessions; and he allowed Margaret to go home during recess to feed Tony. By this stage the Stantons were our near next-door neighbours because we'd moved into recently constructed adjacent houses about 50 metres from our first house. The arrangement worked well. Margaret taught her classes, popped back and forth between the school and our residences, participated in the wider life of the school and soon became a valued staff member. Jeff also helped by organising Margaret's timetable so that although she was teaching full-time her classes were all scheduled during the morning. We remain grateful to Jeff, and to Margaret Stanton, who did a superb job of caring for six-month-old Tony.

At the end of that next year, 1966, the Stantons moved to Goroka, so Tony had a change of child-minders. His new baby-sitter was Anna, the wife of our house-boy, Billy. Anna came to the house each day with Billy, her daughter, Susanna, and her new baby, Lucia, who was much the same age as Tony. This arrangement worked well, too. Anna was a lovely woman and a great mother. She cared for Tony as diligently and lovingly as if he was her own. She helped Billy around the house while looking after the three little children. I can't remember what we paid her, but whatever it was, it was welcome cash income for her family.

Inevitably, when they were together in the house while Margaret and I were away teaching, Billy, Anna and their children spoke *tokples* together. Tony, being adept at languages and a great mimic, soon picked it up. If I came home, and he wasn't aware of my presence, I'd hear him chattering away in *tokples*. Indeed he spoke it more fluently than he did English. If, however, he knew I was in the house he would stop instantly. He must have decided he'd speak *tokples* only when we were absent.

Billy's and Anna's *tokples* was Bungain, a Papuan language within the Torricelli linguistic family. It's spoken by about 3600 people in several villages in the Turubu hinterland. I was greatly pleased by Tony's linguistic versatility. He yabbered away in Bungain too fast for me to make out individual words, but he often repeated one particular phrase that I could hear clearly — '*ngai wor*'. "*Ngai wor, Anna! Ngai wor!*", I'd hear him say. One day I asked her what '*ngai wor*' meant. "Oh, Tony's saying 'Come here!'," she explained in Tokpisin. At two years of age, I regretfully reflected, my son was already manifesting 'colonialist' attitudes.

Tony was a plump little chap with the softest white skin and silky ash-blonde hair. He fascinated the schoolboys. They loved feeling his chubby arms and legs and stroking his skin and hair because these were much softer and more finely textured than their own. "He is very fat, sir!" they'd remark, paying him what they regarded as a great compliment.

To our horror, Tony lost his fat over several days in early December 1966, when he was 15 months old. School had finished for the year, and we were about to fly south for the summer vacation, when he suffered a severe attack of gastroenteritis. It began one Saturday evening while he was still sitting in his high-chair after dinner. Suddenly, he projectile-vomited across the room. After cleaning him up, we put him to bed. The next morning he didn't wake early and begin calling out from his cot as he usually did. Worried, Margaret went to check him. He was awake but lying there listless and immobile. His limbs were floppy, and when we raised them they plopped back on to the bedclothes when we released them. Margaret hurriedly dressed him, then drove him to the hospital while I looked after Rosie. The doctor on duty, a highly competent young English chap called Dr Patrick Vaughan, told her that her little boy was dangerously ill with gastro. He admitted Tony immediately and placed him on a drip and probably began administering intravenous antibiotics as well.

Terrified we would lose our cherished son, Margaret sat with Tony day and night. The hospital staff obligingly placed a stretcher beside his cot so that she could sleep more

comfortably. For a couple of days we couldn't be sure that Tony would survive, but, thanks to the skill of Dr Vaughan and the nursing staff, he eventually rallied. I remember thinking that if he died, I wouldn't have wished to continue living myself. After four or five days, we were allowed to take him home and were told he could go with us to Melbourne on leave.

By this time, we'd missed our flights from Wewak to Melbourne. For a couple of days it seemed we might be unable to go south that year. Jeff Keast, always defensive of his teachers' welfare, used his influence to pull strings in the airlines so that our flights could be rescheduled. We reached Melbourne a couple of days before Christmas. Thanks a million, Jeff, some 57 years later!

The toddler we took back to Melbourne was a shadow of his former self. The weight had fallen from him. Instead of the chubby infant of a fortnight earlier, we had a pathetic little bundle of skin and bone. His grandmothers in Melbourne were visibly shocked by his appearance. After many weeks, perhaps months, he eventually recovered, but he was never again the plump toddler of yore.

Rosie at Brandi

In the meantime, Rosie had been developing into a bright and engaging little girl. Like Tony, she was a continual delight to her parents. She thrived in her new home, but one problem soon became apparent: she was highly allergic to mosquito bites. For some reason, she was usually bitten on the legs and would then scratch her 'itchy bites'. Where she scratched too hard and broke the skin, the bites became infected. That was a hazard because for Europeans in PNG such infections could readily turn into tropical ulcers, which in severe cases required skin grafts. (Both Margaret Stanton and Stirling Henry spent time in the Wewak hospital undergoing skin grafts because of tropic ulcers, so we knew how serious that was.) To prevent Rosie from being bitten on the legs by the mosquitoes as she was out and about, Margaret made lightweight cotton trousers for her to wear. She hated them with a vengeance, but they saved her from the mozzies in mosquito-infested Brandi.

Another mishap befell Rosie in our first months at Brandi. At the foot of the back steps was an ornamental dwarf chilli bush. It grew tiny red fruit only about 2 centimetres long. We took little notice of it until one day Rosie picked a handful of the fruit and began munching them. Within a few seconds she was howling in agony. They were fiery hot. Although she spat them out immediately and we rinsed her mouth and the surrounding skin thoroughly, her mouth and lips became inflamed. I think I might have had the chilli bush removed lest other kids did what Rosie had done.

Rosie's playmate during our first two years at Brandi was Donna Stewart, the daughter of our next-door neighbours, Millie and Peter. They spent many happy hours together playing in each other's homes and on the lawn between our houses. Rosie also began attending pre-school in Wewak with Donna. Millie would take them there several mornings a week.

Rosie also liked consorting with the village women from beyond the Brandi River. They used to sit with their bags of produce in the shade of the large *yar* tree where our driveway met the main road, waiting for the PMVs (passenger motor vehicles) — open-tray trucks — to take them to the market in Wewak. Rosie would wander down the driveway and sit chatting with them. I don't know how they communicated, because she spoke no Tokpisin and they had no English, but they enjoyed each other's company. The women would howl with mirth as Rosie performed little dances to entertain them. One morning we heard them shrieking with laughter more loudly than usual. Looking down the driveway we could see Rosie putting on a special performance. She was wearing just her little *purpur* (grass skirt) with her small *bilum* (woven string bag), suspended by its carrying band from her forehead,

just like the women carried their *bilums*. The women were rolling on the ground, almost hysterical, laughing at the antics of this strange little white girl pretending to be one of them.

Margaret's stories

We have many dozens of stories from our Brandi years. Both Margaret and I each have our own favourites. Here are several of Margaret's. The first two involve her best friend at Brandi, Deirdre Degeling.

- Margaret had recently bought a new lacey black silk bra to go with her black frock. She'd only worn it once when it disappeared from our clothesline. Someone had obviously purloined it. We had no idea who, because we didn't have fences round our houses; and anyone could have wandered in from the nearby road and taken it. Several weeks later we were attending a '*singsing*' (dance & chanting celebration) in Maur, the nearest village on the far side of the Brandi bridge. Margaret and Deirdre were sitting on a log at the side of the dancing ground as the line of female dancers made their entry. Among the women was a large-bosomed lady in traditional grass skirt — and Margaret's missing bra. The bra was a bad fit. "That's my missing bra!" Margaret exclaimed. Deirdre asked if she wanted it back. "No," Margaret responded with a laugh, " her need is greater than mine!"
- One day Margaret and Deirdre were on a shopping expedition to Wewak. They were in Deirdre's car and it was just after Deirdre had gained her driver's licence. The road was wet and muddy because the monsoons were dumping inches of rain each day. On one corner, Deirdre lost control of the car when she hit a wet patch of slippery mud. The car spun around, slipped off the road and ended up in the roadside ditch facing the wrong direction. Fortunately, neither the occupants nor the car suffered any damage. But how to get the car out of the ditch and back on the road?

  Just then a squad of about 15 prisoners from the Boram *kalabus* came marching around the corner under the supervision of a couple of warders. The prisoners were garbed in their gaol attire of crimson laplaps emblazoned with broad black arrows. They were a work detail on their way to some task such as ditch-digging or brush-cutting. One of the warders exclaimed, "*Olaman, yupela bin bagarap long ka bilong yu?"* ("Good heavens above, have the pair of you crashed your car?") "*Yesa*," Margaret replied in her most polite Tokpisin; "*mipela bin bagarap tru long ka. Yupela inap long halivim mipela*?" ("Yes indeed, we've certainly crashed the car. Are you people able to help us?") Not a problem at all! At the warders' command, the prisoners simply gathered around the car, bodily lifted it together as if it were no more than a box of groceries, carried it back on to the middle of the road, then turned it around so it was facing Wewak once more. "*Tenkyu tru ol kalabus. Mipela hamemas tumas yupela bin oraitim ka belong mipela!*" ("Thank you so much, prisoners. We are so very happy you have retrieved our car.") "*Emi orait tupela misus. Yupela i nogat trabl nau!*" ("That's OK, ladies. Your troubles are over now!")
- Another of Margaret's favourite stories is about the 'walking' wine bottle. We had run a dinner party one Saturday evening. When we cleared up afterwards, we left a half empty bottle of wine on the living-room table. The table was against the wall opposite our open bedroom door. When Margaret woke the next morning, she looked through the door. Amazingly, the wine bottle was advancing towards her across the table. She blinked, shook her head and looked again, wondering if she was hallucinating after having drunk one glass of wine too many the night before. The bottle kept moving towards her. At that

point she realised the whole house was shaking because we were experiencing a *guria* or earthquake. The shaking had caused the bottle to rock from side to side and move across the table.

That same *guria* wrecked a large water tank at the school. The tremor had been strong enough to flip the tank up from its concrete stand a couple of centimetres. When it dropped back down, the weight of the water inside split its seams apart as if it had been no more than a custard-filled paper bag dropped from a great height.

Brandi beach

A popular pastime at Brandi for teachers and students alike was body-surfing at Brandi Beach, 500 metres from the school along a track through the kunai. The last hundred metres was over a creek and through a swamp.

In 1967 Pieter Degeling made the walk there easier by bridging the creek. Using a team of about 50 schoolboys, he dragged two enormous kwila logs into position and somehow managed to lay them from bank to bank. Kwila (*Intsia bijuga*) is a tall rainforest tree of PNG, northern Australia and south-east Asia. It has a heavy, oily, dense, termite-resistant, durable timber. I can be fairly confident that unless someone has meanwhile destroyed it, Pieter's bridge will still be in place.

The surf at Brandi ran magnificently during the *Taleo* season, the north-west monsoon, which blew from about November to March. During those five months, set after set of perfectly-formed two- to three-metre waves rolled in continuously day and night. As soon as work parade ended each afternoon, we'd head for the beach to spend the next hour and a half in the surf.

My two main surfing buddies were Paul Somerville and Pieter Degeling. We spent many exhilarating hours together catching waves and competing to see who could get furthest up the steeply-sloping fore dune along the beach. Other staff members came along from time to time, and usually a gaggle of schoolboys as well. Looking to the right and left, I'd often see a dozen of us on the wave together. Those times were among the happiest of my entire life. I remember thinking that I wanted them to last for ever, but always knew they couldn't because all too soon we'd be gone to other jobs in other places.

The beach was about eight kilometres long. Extending between Moem Point in the west and Forok Point in the east, and curving gently, it was the shoreline of Dove Bay. The section we called Brandi Beach was about a third the way from Moem to Forok. At both the Moem and Forok ends the sand was white, composed of broken-down coral. Between them the sand was dark grey, derived from volcanic rock.

The best beach on Dove Bay was the white sand at Forok. The waves there were as near to perfect as surf can be. Access to Forok, however, was difficult from the landward side. We only went there three or four times because to reach the waves we had to park our cars near the village then wade ankle-deep through a murky sago swamp for 600 metres. My mate Peter Lewis and several of his board-riding friends in Wewak used to come into Forok by outboard motor-powered dinghy from Wewak. They built a lock-up lean-to on the beach, where they left their surfboards between visits. Outside they put up a sign saying 'Forok Surf Club'. The leading club member was a chap with the improbable name of Murphy Le Souef. 'Twas hardly surprising that his nickname was 'Murph the Surf'. Despite the beautiful Forok waves, Murph and his fellow board-riders used their beach hut for only one season. That was because getting there was too troublesome. It involved a round trip of about 40 kilometres through a heavy swell in an open boat. Getting to and from the beach through the big waves

was also risky. To avoid being swamped, they had to time their run in and out carefully, waiting for a lull between wave sets.

The hazards of the deep

Hazards we never worried much about when surfing were the sharks and crocodiles lurking nearby. We never saw any but guessed they probably frequented the mouth of the Brandi River about 400 metres east of where we swam. If we ever saw fish jumping from the front of the waves, we'd leave the water because something must have been out the back pushing them forward.

One story passed on in the Brandi staffroom was of the precautions an early Brandi headmaster, John Newnham, took when he and his family swam at the beach. They were said to have swum with about 20 schoolboys, who would form a wide circle in the water. The Newnhams then kept within the circle. Safety in numbers? Or a ring of ready-made bait to distract the sharks from the Newnhams? John was later the headmaster of Port Moresby High School 1963–1966. He then became the Morobe District Education Officer at Lae, which is where I got to know him in 1968 after I'd moved to the new PNG Institute of Higher Technical Education. I never got the chance to ask him about the veracity of the safe-swimming at Brandi story.

My one shark experience in PNG came in our first months at Brandi. Margaret, Rosie and I were spending an afternoon at the Moem beach, a popular swimming spot for Wewak's European community. Situated on the eastern side of Moem Point near the Moem Army barracks, it was an idyllic stretch of white sand overhung by coconut palms. 'Twas a beautiful, safe place to take kids swimming. With a white sand bottom, the clear water was less than a metre deep. On the seaward side, about 30 metres out, a 100-metre-wide coral reef sheltered the beach from the waves. Beyond the reef, the sea-floor dropped away into the dark ocean depths. Leaving the heavily pregnant Margaret and Rosie on the sand among a crowd of other beachgoers, I swam out alone across the reef wearing my facemask and snorkel to gaze at the coral and wondrous sea creatures. As I came up for air on the edge of the reef, I heard people shouting from the shore, "Ian! Shark!" I was about 130 metres from shore in deep water. I immediately turned to catch a wave breaking over the reef and made for the beach, not bothering that the coral might rip me open. I reached the shallow water without mishap and sprinted ashore, to Margaret's enormous relief. Tearfully, she told me that the people on the beach could clearly see a large shark circling me as I swam along the reef's edge.

I hadn't been aware of the shark's presence. I was glad of that because I'd have panicked if I'd seen it. I continued having flashbacks about the incident for months afterwards. I'd wake in a sweat in the middle of the night, visualising what might have happened it the shark had attacked me. The experience left me with a lifelong phobia about swimming in the open sea.

Shark attacks are relatively uncommon — nine in Australia in 2022, including one fatality. The chances of being killed by a shark in Australia are said to be one in eight million, about the same odds you have for a kangaroo killing you. Shark attacks nevertheless happen often enough for the swimming-surfing public to be wary. The last fatality here was only several weeks ago, when a bull shark mauled a 16-year old girl swimming in the Swan River in Perth. Every time I hear of such events, I shiver at the thought of the 'might-have-beens' that day at Moem beach in 1965.

Exploring and visiting

After Paul Somerville joined the staff in early 1966, he and I found we shared an interest in exploring the Brandi hinterland. One of our trips took up into the headwaters of the Brandi River, where it meanders slowly through a narrow deep gorge. At the gorge entrance we found a pair of rafts or canoes. About four metres long, they were ingeniously constructed from the central ribs of sago palm branches. Elegant craft, they must have been constructed by local villagers because no European could have had the know-how of working with 'native materials' to build them. I'd never seen anything like them; and the nearest thing to them that I've been able to find online are the reed and papyrus canoes of northern Africa. The Brandi gorge canoes were triangular, because the broad bases of the sago ribs were lashed together at one end, which was a metre across, while the slender tips were bound together into a point at the other. The ribs were fastened one to another with thin wooden skewers. Each canoe had a two-metre pole that served as a paddle. I can only guess at the canoes' purpose. Fishing or simply exploration? Taking one each, Paul and I paddled through the gorge for about a kilometre before turning back. We left the canoes where we'd found them. We came away with renewed respect for the village people's ingenuity and skills in putting local bush resources to effective use.

A second adventure on the Brandi River occurred after work parade one afternoon while the river was in flood. Paul and I strolled down to the bridge to watch the flotsam being swept downstream. Among this was a huge 20-metre tree trunk, probably felled for the clearing of a village garden and then washed into the river by the flood. A couple of schoolboys were sitting on it, riding it seawards. On the spur of the moment, we jumped in and joined them. Taking our cue, other schoolboys scrambled aboard too. Eventually 35 of us were sitting on the ample log. We rode it all the way to the river-mouth and beyond into the breakers. We then caught waves back to the beach, heedless of the sharks and crocodiles that might have lying in wait nearby. An exhilarating one-off experience!

Another day trip we made was to Dagua, on the coast 40 kilometres west of Wewak. After parking the car near the Catholic church, we clambered up a nearby hill to admire the view. To our east was a vast coconut plantation, with the tall palms of uniform height. As we gazed over it, we knew we were about to experience a *guria*. That was because we heard a sudden cacophony of shrieking birds flying up from the trees on all sides. PNG's avian population can somehow sense an imminent tremor. Birds suddenly squawking and vacating their roosts is a sure sign that an earthquake is about to strike. Looking out over the plantation, we could see the ripple effect of the 'quake as it raced towards us. It was as if a very fast wave were rolling through the treetops, like a carpet-runner being shaken. Then the tremor struck. For several seconds we felt the ground wobbling like jelly beneath us before things returned to pre-tremor normal. Paul tells me that our Dagua experience was what led him into geophysics and seismology. After leaving Brandi he returned to university for an Honours year in those subjects; then after a couple of terms at 'Hitech' in Lae, he gained his PhD in Canada.

Paul and I also made various overnight walking trips into our students' villages. In 1966, Michael Rongemelli (a.k.a. Michael Roe) took us on an overnight expedition to Urimo, in the grass country on the far side of the Prince Alexander Range. This is the long chain of mountains between the coast and the Sepik River. In 1967, John Haugie and William Nindim took us to Wautogik, in the mountains south-east of Dagua. Another weekend in 1967 we drove up to Yangoru, midway between Wewak and Maprik, so we could climb Mount Turu (elevation 1089 metres), a high point in the mountains about seven kilometres north-east of Yangoru. Yangoru sent many students to Brandi, among them Paul Yakremba, to whom I refer below.

Our most adventurous expedition was another we undertook in 1967, to Yuo Island, the home of James Numbauru, one of my Form 4 students. Accompanying us were Margaret, Stirling Henry and Cathy and Keith Burrows. Yuo is a tiny one-village island, only three kilometres offshore and 15 kilometres north-west of Wewak on the far side of Kairiru. James was in my Form 4 History class and had been delighted to learn that in 1545 the Spanish mariner credited with naming New Guinea, Ynigo Ortiz de Retez, had sailed past Yuo and marked it in on the map he had drawn of the north coast. James had been so pleased he wrote a poem about it for *Kanimbieh*.

After I'd suggested that we'd like to visit Yuo, James made the necessary arrangements. We drove west along the Dagua road until we reached the place opposite the island where the Yuo people beached their outrigger canoes when visiting the mainland. A couple of James's *wantoks* were waiting for us when we arrived. Together we launched the canoe, clambered aboard, the sail was raised, and soon we were running before the wind with the island looming closer by the minute. After we beached at James's home village, we were greeted by his family and given fresh *kulaus* (green coconuts) to drink from. We enjoyed a picnic lunch on the beach, then walked the island's circumference, which took about an hour. By then mid-afternoon was approaching, so it was time to sail back to the mainland.

Because the winds weren't as favourable on the return journey, the trip took much longer. About halfway across to the mainland, the canoe seemed to be travelling more slowly and settling more deeply in the water. Meanwhile, James and his *wantoks* were conversing volubly in *plestok*. "James, are we sinking?" I eventually asked. "Yes, sir!" James replied, great relief in his voice. He and his *wantoks* had been reluctant to impart the bad news to us, but now their white visitors had recognised the problem themselves, emergency action could be taken. We six 'expats' volunteered to vacate the canoe and to swim behind it pushing it. That lightened the load appreciably. While we swam and pushed, James and a *wantok* baled furiously, emptying the canoe of the water that had leaked and washed in. The other *wantok* trimmed the sail, maintaining course for the mainland, which we reached in another hour. James seemed much relieved that his six guests hadn't drowned but had lived to teach again.

On all these excursions to our students' home villages, their people treated us kindly and generously. They seemed pleased to think that these unfamiliar white people from their boys' faraway school would want to spend time among them. They'd sit with us chatting in Tokpisin around a fire and drinking mugs of sweet black tea after the evening meal, telling us their village stories. When the village kids gathered around, I'd entertain them by telling them my tall stories. Such visits were also a good way of improving my Tokpisin skills.

Some staff members thought we were addle-brained for wishing to fraternise with simple villagers they regarded as 'bush kanakas'. They couldn't appreciate why we did it. For us, visiting and staying in remote, isolated villages was the best way of experiencing the 'real' PNG — the PNG beyond the urban centres, the PNG where most of the population lived. Sitting yarning with the villagers of an evening was also a humbling experience because it helped us realise that despite the economic, cultural and educational gulf between us, we shared a common humanity. Being among them made us aware that in their own way they were as wise, knowledgeable, witty and accomplished as we were.

Visiting David

As well as the excursions I've just described, we had a couple of trips to Angoram to visit my brother David; and he periodically visited us at Brandi. We were astounded by the sheer size of the Sepik and the vast volume of water it carried. At Angoram the river was 400 metres wide, 35 metres deep and flowing strongly. The Sepik is truly an awesome stream, one of the world's greatest rivers. At its minimum flow, the Sepik disgorges almost 377 million

megalitres of water into the ocean daily. By contrast, the Thames in England releases only 5.7 million a day. As for Australia's largest river, the Murray, at peak flow, as during the January 2023 floods, it sends only 125,000 megalitres a day into the sea. The volume of the Sepik's lowest outflow accordingly exceeds the Murray's greatest outflow by a factor of 3016. As measured by discharge, the Sepik is the world's 40th largest river, bigger than more famous streams such as the Danube, Niger, Indus, Zambesi, Nile and Missouri.

On one memorable occasion, David took us upriver from Angoram by boat to Kambaramba, a village built on stilts in a lagoon on the southern side of the river. The children there learn to paddle a canoe almost as soon as they can walk. Apart from that, I remember the village as being the most mosquito-ridden place I've ever been in. Clouds of mozzies hovered ready to bite as soon as one stood still. David also took us water skiing on the Sepik, the one and only time we've ever tried it. That, too, was an adventure.

In 1967 David moved from Angoram to Tambul at the bottom end of the Western Highlands, where his task was to superintend the introduction and trial of pyrethrum as a cash crop. We visited him there that May, taking with us Paul Somerville and his younger sister Bronwyn, who was visiting from Australia. We met Lucy Ugoka, our sister-in-law, for the first time on that trip. Lucy and David have been together for 57 years now; and the marriage has proved both loving and stable. They now have three children, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Lucy is from Kambot village on the Keram River, the first major tributary of the Sepik going upstream from Angoram. She and David and their three children periodically go back there to visit their kinfolk.

To return to Wewak from Tambul, we had to drive 40 kilometres to Wapenamanda first. Although we landed easily enough on the high Tambul airstrip, our total weight was too great to fly out again. Added to the load were fresh vegetables the pilot was carrying for sale in the Wewak market. Wapenamanda was lower in altitude and had a longer airstrip than Tambul. The flight out was nevertheless hazardous because after taking off we had to cross a high ridge. The pilot, Eileen Stinson, widely known around PNG as 'Pussy Galore' (after the female pilot in *Goldfinger*, the James Bond movie), circled the airstrip gaining height for about 15 minutes. When she guessed we were high enough, she flew straight at the ridge. Sitting beside her, I thought we were going to crash, but at the last moment the updraft lifted the plane up and over. Even so, her wheels clipped the trees along the ridgetop. When we reached Maprik, where we dropped off Paul and Bronwyn so they could visit the famous *Haus Tambarans* (men's spirit houses), we found that twigs and leaves were caught up in the undercarriage.

John Haugie and Paul Yakremba

The two Brandi students we got to know best were John Haugie from Wautogik and Paul Yakremba from Yangoru. They were also the ones with whom we formed lasting friendships. They were classmates whom I taught each year at Brandi, from Form 2 through to Form 4.

We brought John down to Melbourne for several weeks during the 1966–67 long vacation. During that time he became a surrogate member of the extended Willis family. While he was in Melbourne, someone took a photo of him standing amidst our extended family. When it was sent to us after we'd returned to Brandi, Rosie looked at it in amazement. "But John's black!" she exclaimed in surprise. She'd never realised that he was any different to the rest of us. We were grateful that, being a child of the 'Third Culture', she was growing up 'colour-blind' and wholly without racial prejudice.

After finishing at Brandi, John completed a BA degree at the University of PNG, then ran the National Cultural Council, a new government agency set up to regulate the trade in traditional artefacts. He was later the CEO of the Ministry for the Arts. During those years,

we usually brought John across to Lae for a few days annually; and on my research trips to UPNG I usually stayed with him.

John later became a businessman, with diverse business interests. His first venture was to take over from Ansett Airlines the franchise for the duty-free shops at the PNG airports. He used to visit us periodically in Canberra on business trips to Australia.

Sadly, as with so many Papua New Guineans who adopt the Western lifestyle and live a sedentary life, John put on much weight, became diabetic and developed heart disease. He died at only 43 in 1993. I remember him with great affection as one of the best friends I've ever had.

John married Jean Kekedo, a member of a prominent Papuan family who had been educational pioneers in Papua. Both Jean's mother and older sister became Dames of the Order of the British Empire (DBE); and Jean, too, was appointed DBE years after John's death. By then she had served a term as the PNG High Commissioner to the UK. John and Jean had three children, a daughter and two sons. We met the family in 1998 when they were visiting Canberra and came to see us.

Paul Yakremba, or 'Yakky' as we nicknamed him, was always the smallest boy in his form because he was two or three years younger than his classmates. He didn't begin his teenage growth spurt until halfway through Form 4. He was always peeved that he didn't become a prefect at Brandi because he was the smallest boy in the form.

Paul came on to Lae and to the Institute of Higher Technical Education (later 'Unitech', the University of Technology) at the same time as we did in early 1968. He studied Civil Engineering, a five-year course that he completed successfully at the end of 1972. During his years at Unitech we watched over him. He had to spend six months during his fourth year on work experience in Melbourne. He lived in the YMCA in South Melbourne but spent many weekends in Brighton with my parents, whom he called 'Grandma' and 'Grandpa'.

When Paul graduated at the end of 1972, his elderly father, Kuira, flew down from Yangoru for the ceremony. He kindly presented Margaret and me with a 'Raggiana' bird-of-paradise head-dress to thank us for being Yakky's '*liklik mama na papa*' (surrogate parents) during his time at Unitech. I displayed this item in my study for the next 40 years, until it finally disintegrated.

After graduating, Paul left Lae to pursue his engineering career elsewhere. Unfortunately, we lost contact with him when we went off to the UK on sabbatical leave in August that year. I later heard that he was working for one of the major oil companies, and was in charge of unloading the oil tankers bringing petroleum to the Port Moresby fuel terminal. A quick Google search just now reveals that he's probably still working and living in West New Britain. He'd be about 71 now. In the weeks ahead, I'll see if I can track him down to re-establish contact with him.

Concerts, choirs and debating

Brandi promoted various cultural activities. Among others, we staged concerts and participated in inter-school eisteddfods and debating competitions.

The eisteddfod on the Wewak oval was an annual event. Brandi participated in the secondary schools' competition, entering both junior and senior choirs. They sang unaccompanied and, as I recall, usually in unison. The more accomplished choir conductors would train their choirs to sing in parts. David Norris, the E-Course teacher who was the headmaster at Kainde Primary 'T' School on Wewak's southern outskirts, was a superlative conductor. His choir, which sang harmony, invariably won the prize for best primary school choir. I recall that the Mother Superior who was headmistress of the Mercy Girls Secondary School at Yarapos was a specialist music teacher. Her all-girl choirs usually won the

secondary school competitions. After Nalden Matautu arrived at Brandi, our choirs did much better. A New Irelander, Nalden was a gifted conductor. In 1967 his senior choir beat Yarapos into second place.

In 1966 we introduced an inter-secondary school debating competition with four participating schools — Brandi High School, Yarapos Girls' High School (situated on the Dagua Road west of Wewak), St Xavier's Boys' High School and St John's Catholic Seminary (on Kairiru Island). That meant three male teams and one female team. The coach of the Yarapos girls' team was the formidable Sister Valentine. A Sisters of Mercy nun from the All Hallows School in Brisbane, she was an outstanding teacher, administrator and combative champion for her school. I forget how the competition was organised, but I remember that Brandi and Yarapos met in the grand final. I was coaching the Brandi team. The topic, issued to us a week in advance, was 'That the practice of bride-price is retarding the development of PNG'. Brandi had to argue the affirmative. I developed our case carefully and we rehearsed it thoroughly. On the night of the debate, however, the Yarapos girls made our team look like inarticulate hoboes. Sister Val had prepared the Yarapos case as if it were for a critical vote at the UN General Assembly. She'd rehearsed her girls to a pitch of rhetorical perfection. They presented their case with eloquence and passion. They were truly magnificent. We didn't stand a chance against them.

Sister Valentine disappeared from the scene overnight at the beginning of 1967. When we inquired about her, her fellow nuns explained that she'd returned to Brisbane for urgent skin cancer treatment. She may well have done so, but Jeff Keast's main Catholic Mission informant later told him that she'd eloped with a young German chap called Heinz, who was a mission pilot and later flew for Lufthansa. Her erstwhile fellow nuns never mentioned her name to us again. Margaret and I had liked her greatly. During visits that Yarapos teams made to Brandi, the nuns used to have their lunch in our house. Sister Val was always entertaining company. Wherever she ended up, I'm sure she'd have commanded respect.

One of our favourite 'Rosie' stories arose from the visits of the Yarapos nuns to our house. The habits they wore were all-white, to suit the tropical conditions. After one of their visits, Rosie asked Margaret for a white sheet. "I want to be a Yarapos sister," she explained when Margaret asked her why. Rosie, who loved 'dress-ups', enjoyed pretending to be a Sister of Mercy. Next time the nuns visited us, she was wearing her makeshift habit. The nuns chortled with mirth when Margaret explained that Rosie wished to be one of them.

At Brandi our main cultural event for the year was Speech Night in December. Several speeches were made, including by the Headmaster, the District Commissioner and the local Member of Parliament; but otherwise Speech Night was a hugely entertaining variety show.

In advance of Speech Night, Ron Reisner and a team of about 40 schoolboys erected a large stage on the parade ground. The schoolgirls then adorned it with palm fronds, hibiscus blossoms and '*ol kainkain bilas*' (all sorts of decorations). On the night it would have rivalled Melbourne's Myer Music Bowl.

Every class at Brandi had to stage an item. Their class choirs sang. Their string bands strummed their ukeleles, guitars and tea-chest basses, while the percussionists kept time with jingling 'lagerphones' (beer bottle tops loosely nailed to broomsticks). Their comedians performed hilarious skits and sketches. Their orators recited stirring poetry. Their mimics impersonated members of staff. (One year Michael Roe delivered an uproariously funny parody of Jeff Keast issuing a DCM.) And their thespians presented short plays. In 1967 my Form 4 students presented excerpts from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which we'd studied during the year. They dressed in togas (borrowed sheets) and spoke famous lines such as *'Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once.'* I've forgotten who played what role, except that John Harungu performed strongly as JC. Perhaps I cast Camilla Yanmari as Calpurnia.

The Speech Night concerts ensured that the school year ended on a high. Jeff Keast was delighted at the goodwill they created among Wewak's leading citizens. He was expansively grateful to his staff and students for the effort they'd made. We could depart for the long vacation well pleased with what we'd collectively achieved.

Leaving Brandi

In the days after the 1967 Speech Night, we left Brandi for good. Following the long school vacation in Melbourne, in late January 1968 we moved to Lae, where I'd been appointed to a lectureship in English at the Institute of Higher Technical Education. Margaret would be teaching a Grade 5 class at Bulae Primary 'A' School. I briefly returned to Brandi twice, in 1970 and 1973, on recruiting trips to promote Unitech to potential students; but it's now 51 years since I've been there.

We look back on our time at Brandi nostalgically. We mightn't have realised it while we were there, but those three years were among our happiest in the 62 years we've been married.

Regrettably, we never saw most of our students or teaching colleagues again; nor do we know what became of them. About 15 years ago a few of us toyed with the idea of organising a Brandi reunion at Brandi. That was after John Harungu had met David by chance in Port Moresby one day. John looked at David and asked if he was Ian Willis. David replied that he was his brother. With tears in his eyes, John told David that, thanks to his inspirational teachers, his four years at Brandi were the best he'd ever seen.

Nothing came of our hopes for a Brandi reunion, but what we did do in 2009 was conduct a get-together of our friendship group. We held it in Burrawang, where Pieter and Deirdre had retired. Apart from the Degelings and Willises, those who came were Stirling and Rita Henry, Brian and Val Pell, Peter and Marian Lewis, and Paul Somerville. A most happy weekend of rolling back the decades to a time we were all grateful to have shared.

9. HITECH-UNITECH

After our happy times at Brandi High School we spent almost six years in Lae. Lae sits above the sea at the north-western corner of the Huon Gulf, two kilometres from the mouth of the Markham River. Then, as now, it was Papua New Guinea's second largest city after Port Moresby and PNG's main industrial centre.

Our reason for moving to Lae was my appointment to the lecturing staff of the new PNG Institute of Higher Technical Education. The Institute's name was soon conveniently abbreviated to 'Hitech' though the acronym 'IHTE' was also commonly used.

Hitech moved to Lae in January 1968 following a vote of the House of Assembly to relocate it there from Port Moresby. It had only opened a year earlier, in 1967, on the same campus as the University of Papua New Guinea at Waigani on Moresby's north-eastern outskirts. The politicians from the Territory of New Guinea, concerned that Papua and Port Moresby were reaping most of the benefits of tertiary educational development, voted as a bloc to remove IHTE to Lae. As Margaret and I arrived in town at the end of January, Hitech was still in the process of relocating itself. The IHTE administration was occupying a rented house in the industrial suburb between the aerodrome and the wharf at the Markham mouth; the temporary student accommodation would be a pavilion at the show grounds; and the temporary lecture rooms would be several marquees yet to be erected on the Hitech site nine kilometres north of downtown Lae.

The Hitech campus, 500 hectares on the eastern side of the Bumbu River, occupied a former cocoa plantation in an area known as Taraka. As well as the remnants of the plantation, the site contained a stand of virgin rainforest and an expanse of grassland that was soon converted into sports ovals. Construction was proceeding apace there. Roads, water, sewerage and power supply were nearing completion. So, too, were separate 'expatriate' and 'indigenous' housing areas, a student hall of residence, dining hall, two classroom blocks, an administrative building and maintenance workshops.

Why Hitech?

If I'd remained in secondary teaching, I was to have been posted as headmaster to Kerowagi in the Wahgi Valley at the western end of the Chimbu District and east of Mount Hagen. My task would have been to open a new government high school there. In the intervening 55 years, what is now the Kerowagi Secondary School has grown into a large institution with over 1700 students. I guess that if I'd accepted the challenge of initiating that process, I'd have made a fair fist of the job. School management wasn't my vocation, however; and in any case there was no future for 'expats' as school principals. 'Localisation' was becoming a catch-cry. Within several years 'Nationals' — Papua New Guineans — were replacing European secondary teachers. As the experience of my friend Matt Power showed, an excellent record of service as a secondary principal in PNG counted for little in Australia. If I'd gone to Kerowagi, within ten years I'd have been back in Australia as a 'Band 1' (base-grade) classroom teacher in either Canberra or the Northern Territory, where ex-PNG teachers usually went.

The main reason I joined the Hitech staff was that during the third term of 1967 Pieter Degeling, my Brandi colleague, had showed me a newspaper advertisement for English lecturing staff at IHTE. "That's a job you could do. Why not apply for it?" he said. Believing in the notion of 'nothing ventured, nothing gained', I took up his suggestion. A couple of weeks after submitting my application, I was invited to Port Moresby for an interview. The interviewers were Dr Eric Duncanson, the IHTE Director, and Mike Kellock, the head of the

Surveying Department. They seemed impressed by my Brandi experience. Dr Duncanson said that the newly appointed head of the English Department, Peter Botsman, remembered me from Toorak Teachers' College and had requested that I be interviewed. Another couple of weeks later I was offered the job, starting at the end of January 1968.

Early months in Lae

After the usual six-week end-of-year vacation back in Melbourne, we returned to PNG, but to Lae rather than Wewak. We spent a couple of nights in the Huon Gulf Motel, opposite the north-western end of the aerodrome, then moved into a two-storeyed unit in Salamanda Avenue on the Dowsett housing estate. This was a new development south of the Markham Valley Road (nowadays called the Highland Highway), two kilometres out of downtown Lae and on the other side of the highway to the Lae Golf Club. The IHTE administration had leased a series of recently completed units there. Most staff lived on the estate until they could move into the houses being built on the Hitech campus. Margaret and I lived in our Dowsett unit for some 15 months, until about April 1969, when our house on the campus was completed. Katie was born in March 1969 while we were still occupying our Dowsett unit.

When I reported for duty at the IHTE administration's house on the day after we'd reached Lae, I was given a task that occupied much of the next week. I was the only one of the four English Department staff members who'd so far arrived, so there was no departmental work to do. Instead, I was assigned a team of Papua New Guinean labourers and placed in charge of unpacking, assembling and installing the furniture in the Hitech units on the Dowsett estate. This mainly consisted of chairs, table, beds and refrigerators. In several units we were still putting the furniture in place as the new occupants arrived.

In the meantime the Hitech students also began arriving. Another of my tasks was setting them to work in the pavilion at the Lae Showground, adjacent to and on the Lae side of the Dowsett estate. Their job was to assemble their steel-frame beds, which had to be bolted together. Because insufficient classroom space would be ready, a large marquee was erected on the campus and equipped with student tables, chairs and white-boards. Students probably helped with that task. Another undertaking was to build a causeway across a ford in the Bumbu River, which shortened the journey from the showground to the campus by four kilometres. A large team of students under the direction of the Professor of Civil Engineering, Paul Ryall, completed this exercise in a couple of days. The causeway comprised a dozen or more large concrete pipes laid side by side across the ford with gravel packed above and at either end to form a roadway. The causeway lasted for only several weeks before the gravel washed away, but in that time it proved very convenient. Perhaps taking note, the government's Works Department subsequently built a bridge there.

Meanwhile, out on the Hitech campus, construction of the first two classroom blocks, the staff housing estates, the student accommodation and dining hall continued apace. Among the first staff residences to be completed was that of the Director, Dr W. Eric Duncanson (1907–1994), and his wife, Olive.

In the meantime, too, new staff continued arriving. Some, like my new boss, Peter Botsman (1933–1997) and his family (wife Barbara, and two primary school age children, Peter Jnr. and Lynn), were able to move into their houses on the campus without having to occupy a unit on the Dowsett estate first. As more staff arrived, the teaching departments began taking shape. Initially only seven formed: Civil Engineering under Paul Ryall, Surveying under Mike Kellock, Business Studies under Ray Middleton, Chemistry under John Walsh, Physics under Bala Subramanian, Mathematics under Maurice Leigh and English under Peter Botsman. An eighth and ninth, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, were added in 1969; the tenth, Architecture, followed in 1971. The original three

departments, Surveying, Mathematics and Physics, had formed in Port Moresby in 1967 before Hitech was relocated to Lae. Each had been a one-teacher department —Maurice Leigh in Mathematics, Colin Reekie in Physics and Mike Kellock in Surveying.

In its first year the English Department had a staff of four. Peter Botsman, the head, was an inspirational teacher, charismatic leader, and an astute academic politician. He had been a teachers' college lecturer in Victoria. His first degree was in Commerce, but he was completing a MA thesis in English at Monash University, where he had most recently been a Teaching Fellow in English. He'd taught Margaret at Toorak Teachers' College nine years earlier and had known me there too. I owed my Hitech appointment to his remembering me. My three years' teaching English at Brandi High School was also in my favour because I was the only member of his department with previous PNG teaching experience.

Pamela Riley, as mentioned, was a senior secondary school English teacher with wide experience in Australia and overseas. During our first year at Hitech, Pamela and I shared the same broom-cupboard-sized office, and we lived in adjoining units on the Dowsett estate. Pamela was a very competent teacher and administrator, very well read, had a great sense of humour and a no-nonsense manner. I respected her greatly and learned much from her. She became something like an older sister to me; and indeed she was the same age as my older sister, Ruth. The fourth member of staff, and the last to arrive in Lae, was Des Cooper. He and his wife Bobbie and their two young boys were immigrants from England to Tasmania. Their house in Hobart had been severely damaged during the catastrophic 'Black Tuesday' bushfires in February 1967. Des, a gentle, whimsical chap, was about four years older than me. A Spanish speaker, he was completing a MA in colonial Spanish literature.

Before our classroom teaching began, Peter called Pamela, Des and me together several times to plan what we as a department would teach. We couldn't agree on what syllabus we should adopt; and I don't recall that we ever developed one. Instead, Peter left us to our own devices; and so we each taught what we thought was appropriate. Generally, that meant an emphasis on practical English usage, linked as far as possible to the technological disciplines our students had enrolled in. Wherever possible, we shared material and we each learned from what the others were doing. My criticism of the department as Peter ran it was that we should have developed an agreed curriculum document that would have demonstrated what we were doing to support the other departments.

My assigned classes were third year Surveying (only four students), first year Business Studies and first year Engineering, with about 20 students in each. I worked diligently at lesson preparation and teaching, and I strove to establish personal friendships with my students. It was hard work. One difficulty was that they were from many parts of PNG, and for many this was their first experience of sitting in class with a majority of students who weren't from their home districts. Among such 'foreigners', they were inherently suspicious of each other. Another problem, albeit temporary, was that they thought they were being short-changed. They'd enrolled in degree and diploma courses, but here they were living in a showgrounds pavilion, going to and from classes along a circuitous route on the lumbering Hitech bus, and taking some of their classes in a marquee. Yet another difficulty was that they regarded English as a non-essential discipline. Because they were a select elite who already spoke and wrote English fluently, they didn't see why they should continue learning it. They consequently didn't hold us English teachers in the same high esteem as the teachers in their chosen professional specialities.

Within a short time some of us lecturers recognised the need for extracurricular activities to boost student morale. As I'd done at Brandi, I introduced Australian Rules football. I formed a team, which included a couple of staff members, and entered it in the town competition. I was officially the playing coach, but the team didn't need much coaching because they'd all played the game before. A group of Central District lads from Kwikila

High School were so good they'd have found a place in any top-grade amateur team in Melbourne. Their athleticism and finely honed skills were a delight to watch. All I had to do was equip them with uniforms, supervise their twice-weekly training sessions, undertake the secretarial duties and arrange their transport to and from matches on the Hitech bus. From memory, we lost only one match that first year in the competition. We went on to win the grand final, for which I enlisted Peter Botsman as honorary coach. It was a role he played to perfection because he had the requisite panache and had played the game himself.

Another of my ventures was a monthly staff-student newsletter, *Tek Tok*, which I produced for the next year. I was also busy being a student again myself. That was because I'd enrolled as an external part-time student in the 'MA Preliminary' program of the History Department at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in Port Moresby. The Hitech management encouraged us to enter higher degree programs because it was keen for the staff to upgrade their qualifications. Many staff members availed themselves of the opportunity to undertake further postgraduate study. Over subsequent years they earned doctorates and masters' degrees through studies at UPNG, Hitech/Unitech itself, and various Australian and UK universities.

Hitech was almost inevitably institutionally upward-mobile, destined to achieve university status sooner rather than later. The acronym IHTE disappeared in late 1969, when the name was changed to 'PNG Institute of Technology'. The nickname 'Hitech' continued in use, however, until mid-1973, when the name changed again, this time to 'PNG University of Technology'. The nickname then became — and has remained — 'Unitech'. I'll use both nicknames as appropriate in the following sections.

More than a little stressed

The continued pressure of my various commitments eventually led to my one and only experience of mental health problems. Looking back on it, I guess I might have been heading for a nervous breakdown. After several months, I began feeling continually nauseous. I vomited often, usually after meals. Worried that I might have stomach cancer, I consulted our GP, Brian Todd, who ran a large and busy practice in central Lae.

After I'd described my symptoms, 'Toddy' (as he was widely known) asked me about my lifestyle. I explained that I was working hard at my job but wasn't finding it very fulfilling because of the 'ad hockery' of the English department's teaching program and the unresponsiveness of my students. Further, my sporting and journalistic involvements plus my postgraduate studies were an additional burden. As well as all that, I worried about being underqualified. Various colleagues already had, or were completing, masters' degrees and doctorates, whereas my own pass BA in 'easy option' disciplines compared poorly with those of most colleagues, which were in the 'difficult' Maths-based disciplines. On top of all that, Margaret was pregnant again, and her accustomed severe morning sickness worried me.

"You're over-stressed and suffering from depression!" Toddy announced. I disagreed, pointing out that I didn't feel miserable or sad. "You have all the classic symptoms of severe anxiety," he countered; "but I can help you with some simple medication." He then wrote out a script for tablets to be taken twice daily.

I dutifully took Toddy's tablets, but the side-effects were unwelcome. I felt lethargic, drained of energy, always drowsy — continually 'zonked out' and on the verge of collapse from exhaustion. After about a fortnight, I decided that the treatment was worse than the illness. My inquiries indicated that Toddy had me on diazepam, otherwise known as Valium, which by the late 1960s had become the drug *du jour* for depression and other anxiety-related mental health problems. I chose to self-remediate. I flushed the rest of the diazepams down the loo.

Drug-free, I began thinking objectively about my problems. Nothing, I decided, was personally as important as my own mental wellbeing. I knew I was doing an important job in a rapidly developing country, and in an institution where working conditions would inevitably improve. My colleagues thought I was a capable, diligent teacher, with good classroom management skills. I was confident that I was a good organiser who always got things done after adopting a project. In my postgraduate studies I was an enterprising student with above average research and writing skills. And I had the support of a wife who was not only a superbly gifted teacher herself but a wise counsellor and excellent homemaker as well. Given all those advantages, why should I be depressed? That attitude, which reduces to thinking positively, helped me through the rest of my salaried working career, and beyond into retirement.

Before leaving this topic, I'll add an anecdote about my GP, Brian Todd. 'Toddy' was one of Lae's leading socialites, a member of the Golf Club and other groups that attracted the socially prominent. He was also a lavish host, well known for his elegant dinner parties. It so happened that on one evening, one of his friends, Gordon Farrelly, a major plumbing contractor, rang to ask if Toddy could make a house call to check on his young daughter, who was running a high temperature. "Gordon, it's raining heavily and we have visitors," Toddy responded, "so give your daughter a couple of aspirins and call me again in the morning if she's no better," Several weeks after this incident, Gordon Farrelly received a phone call at about 8.00 o'clock one Saturday evening. The caller was Brian Todd. "Could you do us a favour, please Gordon?" Toddy asked. "We're in the middle of a dinner party, and our toilet has just stopped working. Could you come round and see what's wrong with it?" "Well, Brian," Gordon replied, "I suggest you drop a couple of aspirins into it then call me again in the morning if it's no better!"

Particular pals

Meanwhile, a sense of community was developing among the Hitech staff as they worked together in those early months in Lae to ensure that a full year's instruction could be offered. We all pitched in to help do whatever was necessary. Because we were all new to Lae and lived near each other in the Dowsett units, we began socialising. Some of us became lifelong friends; for instance, Hilary and Robert Hind, Pamela Riley and Graham and Sue McLean, who occupied the flats on either side of ours, remain our friends. Robert had just arrived as a lecturer in Chemistry; and Pamela, like me, would be lecturing in English. Later, after we'd all moved out to the Hitech campus, Hilary became our child-minder, caring for Katie during the day, which enabled Margaret to resume teaching. Hilary, a pharmacy dispenser, worked in the Lae pharmacy, but gave up that job to have her two boys, Andrew and Duncan. Andrew was only a month or so younger than Katie, and so they became each other's best friends. Because Hilary used to wheel Andrew and Katie round town in a double-pusher, people assumed they were twins. When Robert and Hilary moved to their house on the Hitech campus, Graham and Sue McLean took over their Dowsett unit until their campus house was ready for occupation. Pamela continued occupying her unit until her house on the campus was ready. After we'd all left PNG, Pamela married Neil Hardie, a lecturer in Electrical Engineering who was one of my bush-walking buddies.

As we would discover, the experience of living, working, socialising and sharing in extracurricular adventures together in PNG's exotic environment forged enduring bonds. This occurred despite our differing backgrounds. Here's a summary of the Lae friends we've kept in touch with:

- **Pamela Riley** was Australian born, bred and educated, but she had travelled and taught widely outside Australia. **Neil Hardie** was of Scottish origin but had spent his boyhood in Zimbabwe (still called Rhodesia then). After sabbatical leave in England, Pamela completed a Master's degree in the pedagogy of reading comprehension and taught at the University of Sydney. Neil relocated from Scotland to Sydney and married Pamela in 1980. He subsequently moved from electrical engineering into management studies, in which he gained MSc and PhD degrees.
- **Robert** and **Hilary Hind** were English immigrants to Australia. Their two boys, Andrew and Duncan, were both born in Lae. After sabbatical leave in England, they returned to Victoria. Robert went back to secondary teaching; Hilary completed a Diploma in Welfare Studies and later a BA; she then enjoyed a long career in university administration in the medical faculty at Monash University. They subsequently went their separate ways and each remarried. Robert married Sally and Hilary married Geoff. Both couples have visited us in Canberra, and we've visited them in Melbourne.
- **Graham ('Mac')** and **Sue McLean**, who arrived at IHTE in 1969, were from Manchester. Mac, an electrical engineer, was a Glasgow-born Scot and very proud of it. Sue, a physiotherapist from Staffordshire, worked at the ANGAU* Memorial Hospital in Lae until she produced Nigel, the first of her three children. They returned to the UK at the end of 1970 and settled at Lymm, outside Manchester in Cheshire, where their two other children, Fiona and Angus, were born. Mac returned to the University of Manchester as a senior lecturer, but he later quit academia to work in industry, for a US electrical generator manufacturer.
- **Joan Michie** (née Dunstan, 1926–2022), came to Hitech in 1969 after long experience in migrant education and secondary teaching in Australia. She'd also taught in Japan and at Kanowit, a small town on the Rajang River in Sarawak, Borneo. She shared an office with me for five years. During that time, she became my closest friend among my Hitech-Unitech colleagues, and a strong influence upon me.

  Joan was a highly opinionated 'left-liberal'. Her views were shaped by what she read in the airmail edition of the UK Sunday newspaper, *The Observer*, which she zealously read from cover to cover. Joanie, as I called her, was anti-capitalist, a 'born again' socialist, pro-Communist and a fervent advocate of China. After leaving Unitech, she had two one-year stints teaching English in Chinese universities.

  For all her left-leaning opinions, Joan was open-minded and tolerant. She was also poised, articulate, widely read, and a good listener. An excellent classroom teacher, she was popular with her students and respected by fellow staff members. Her name confused some students. They called her 'Mrs Micky Jones', which became her nickname in our department.

  Joan lived apart from her husband, the flamboyant Byron, who died while Joan was in Lae. They had two daughters, Dalmeny and Carla, to whom she was fiercely loyal. Both came to Lae for extended periods to be with her and became friends of their mother's friends. After leaving Lae, Joan taught English in the TAFE sector in Sydney until her retirement. She then divided her time between her home in Narrabeen and Tweed Heads, sharing the last 30 years of her life with her partner,

* ANGAU is the acronym of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit, the Australian Army formation responsible for civil administration in PNG during World War II.

Richard. They travelled widely. She used to keep me apprised of their doings in her long (35-page) handwritten Christmas letters. She died last year after simply 'fading away', as Carla said when she rang us to let us know.

- The late **George Argent** (1941–1919) and **Sue**, his wife, were respectively from London and Sheffield. They came to Lae in 1969 so that George, a botanist, could establish a living collection of PNG bananas on behalf of the PNG Biological Foundation. He cultivated a three-acre plot of banana specimens at the northern end of the Hitech campus. Sue tutored in the Hitech-Unitech English Department. After leaving PNG in 1973, they settled near Edinburgh in Scotland, where George became a senior botanist at the Royal Edinburgh Botanic Gardens. Their three children, Iain, Jamie and Jenny, were born and grew up in Edinburgh. Sue subsequently became a specialist in teaching English as a second language at the Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh.
- **Lenore Burton** (formerly Adams) came to Lae in 1969 with her husband, Bob Adams, and four primary school-age children, Tracey, Kristen, Craig and Mitch. Bob was a lecturer in Business Studies. We'd known his parents, George and Zena Adams, at Brandi High School in 1967, when George, a builder, built the new staffroom and office block. George and Zena followed us to Lae in 1968 when George obtained a job in the Hitech building maintenance unit. After Lenore and Bob returned to Australia at the end of 1974, they separated and eventually divorced. Lenore, who was highly versatile and outward-going, found a secretarial job with the Student Union at the University of Sydney. There she met **Richard Burton**, a mechanical engineer from England who'd joined the Unitech lecturing staff in 1972. Richard was visiting the university from Lae. They subsequently married and settled first at Maleny in Queensland and then at Esperance in Western Australia.

  Lenore's first career had been as a wife and mother. Her second career began after she and Richard moved to Maleny. An evangelical Christian, in Maleny she found a cause to live for — the Ebenezer Foundation. This is a Christian orphanage and school in Livingstone, Zambia, that cares for AIDS orphans. Supported by Richard, Lenore tirelessly promoted and raised funds for Ebenezer for over 20 years. She visited the orphanage periodically and travelled Australia speaking to community groups to garner aid for Ebenezer. She also promoted Ebenezer forcefully to her large network of former Unitech friends. How could we resist? And so some of us became regular Ebenezer contributors, salving our consciences and affirming our friendship with Lenore and Richard by doing so.
- **Hector** and **Bori Clark** arrived from the USA in early 1971. Hector, a metallurgist, came to teach in the Mechanical Engineering department. He had a PhD from the University of London and was a friend of Graham McLean, whom he'd known when they'd been undergraduates at the University of Manchester and had skied together. Bori was of Hungarian and German descent and had grown up in Budapest, where she had earnt a PhD in Psychology. They had two little children, Marcell and Erika, who spoke mainly Hungarian. Bori's 16-year-old daughter from her first marriage, Klara, was at boarding school in Sydney but used to come to Lae for her school vacations. Marcell and Erika used to call me 'Ugrós Bácsi', 'the jumping uncle' in Hungarian'. That was because I began my days with 20 minutes of '5BX' exercises, which involved, among others, running and jumping on the spot. The Clarks, who lived next door, could hear me bouncing up and down. After PNG, the Clarks lived in Melbourne and the West Indies for several years before settling in Lawrence, Kansas,

where Hector lectured in Mechanical Engineering. They then retired, first to Italy but later (1997) to Budapest, where we've visited them twice.

- The late **Jack** and **Mary Woodward**, both New Zealanders, came to Lae in early 1971 from Adelaide, where Jack had held the chair in Electrical Engineering at the University of Adelaide. They were a dozen years older than the rest of us and had five children: Alistair, Matthew, Frank, Rebecca and Maurice. Jack became the Professor of Electrical Engineering at Unitech. Mary (who died in 2015) and Jack (who died in 2023 at age 97), were greatly respected as the 'moral conscience' of Unitech. Quakers by religion, they were inspirational seekers after justice, especially for the disadvantaged remote village communities in the Lae hinterland. After their time in Lae, they returned to New Zealand, where Jack eventually rose to be Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Auckland.
- **Diane** and **Steven Seumahu** lived across the road from us. Steve, from Ambon in Indonesia, was the son of a Christian pastor. An early Colombo Plan student, he'd come to Australia to further his training as an electrical engineer specialising in communications. Diane, from a farm at Wedderburn in central Victoria had been a boarder at Methodist Ladies' College in Melbourne and had then trained in nursing. She was also a superlative photographer. The set of photos she took of our children shortly before we departed Lae are the best we have. Diane and Steve had two little children, Sonya and Ben. The Seumahus, who arrived at Unitech in 1971, were leaders among the evangelical Christian community on the Hitech campus and were very popular among the United Church students in particular. They left Lae at the same time as us in August 1973. We travelled to London together on the same plane; we then stayed in the same 'B&B' in Paddington for several days, exploring nearby London together. Post-Lae, Steve lectured at the Nanyang Technical University in Singapore for many years before retiring to Elanora on Queensland's Gold Coast. Steve's middle name is Eli, so I customarily called him 'Steven Eli', which always amused him greatly. He tells me I'm the only one of his friends who ever does.
- **Adrian Boddy** came to Unitech in early 1971 as one of the three foundation members of the Unitech Faculty of Architecture. Like Robert Hind and me, he was a Melbourne High School Old Boy, which helped us bond. His specialties were design and photography, in each of which he excelled. After five years at Unitech he won a lecturing position at the University of Technology Sydney, where he rose to be the Dean of Architecture. He also completed a MArch degree on the architectural photography of Max Dupain. At UTS he also found his life's partner, **Traudi Line** (née Rutzkiova), who had grown up in Germany but was of Czech-Polish descent. In retirement he became a guest lecturer in architecture, design and the visual arts. 'Adi' and 'Trauds' remain close friends of ours.
- **Gordon Holden** arrived at Unitech at the beginning of 1972 to join the Architecture staff. A recent graduate, he was married to Jean and later in the year the first of their children, Katie, was born. We attended the 'bottom-wetting' party that Gordon ran for her. Gordon was one of the fittest, toughest and most determined bushwalkers I've ever known. It was he who led Hector Clark, Neil Hardie, George Argent and me to the summit of Mount Saruwaged at Easter 1972. It was to keep up with Gordon on such bushwalking jaunts, that I began running daily to become fit enough. He was himself a superb long-distance runner. With several of his athletically inclined friends, Gordon used to organise weekly 5-kilometre cross-country runs for anyone on the campus who was interested. As a result of these activities, long-distance running

became my main exercise for the next 30 years until ankle injuries forced me to take up swimming instead.

Post-Lae, Gordon climbed higher up the academic hierarchy than most of my Unitech contemporaries did. He came to Unitech with a DipArch but subsequently earned MA (Urban Design) and PhD degrees and was in turn Head of Architecture at Queensland University of Technology, Dean of Architecture and Design at the Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, and then the foundation Head of Architecture at Griffith University in Brisbane. After he and Jean parted company, he married Lyn, with whom he has visited us several times in Canberra. As the Professor Emeritus of Architecture at Griffith University, Gordon has an impressively long list of publications and is still publishing articles and books.

- **David** and **Mary Dale** were the last of the permanent friends we made in Lae. They arrived at the beginning of 1973 and moved into the house across the road from ours. David, from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), had an Oxford DPhil in Chemistry and came to Unitech as head of the Chemistry department. Mary, who had a PhD in Physics from the University of Western Australia, initially taught in the Unitech Physics department but within several months took a job as head of the Science department at the Lae Technical College, a TAFE (technical and further education) institution. They had four boys, Chris, Nicky and Tony, who were of similar ages to our three, and John, a babe in arms. The three older sons attended the Taraka Primary School with our older two. Even though the Dales were our neighbours for only two terms, we saw much of them; and, despite the 'tyranny of distance', we've continued seeing them since they returned to Perth in 1978. David was a champion squash player. There was probably no one in Lae who could beat him. Squash was a business for him as well as a sport. As a sideline to his Unitech career, he built and ran his own squash courts beside the football oval on the corner of Huon and Bumbu Roads.

  David also saved my life during my last fortnight in Lae. He'd just bought a two-person fibreglass kayak, which we tried out one afternoon on the Bumbu River. All went well until shortly before we reached our destination, the bridge on Butibam Road. As the current swept us round one bend opposite Ahi-Hengali village, we noticed a metal pole, a gun barrel, embedded mid-stream and rising a metre above the water, which was only about two feet (0.6 metre) deep. We tried to avoid it, but were pushed against it, striking it 'mid-ship'. As that happened, the kayak flipped upside-down, collapsed like a wet paper bag, and wrapped itself around the pole. David escaped, but I was trapped with my head underwater and the crushed kayak pinning my legs together so firmly I couldn't move them. I desperately tried kicking my legs, but to no avail. I was wondering how much longer I could hold my breath when suddenly the kayak broke in two, releasing me. That was because David had grabbed hold of its rear end and was shaking it vigorously to free it from the pole. As we sat panting on the bank regaining our breath, I noticed that the outsides of both my legs were abraded and bleeding from knee to ankle. I must have been kicking so hard that I'd rubbed off the skin on the rough inner wall of the kayak. Thanks, David, for the 50 years of extra life your timely help has given me!

The Duncansons

We also regarded **Eric** and **Olive Duncason** as good friends. Both were originally Australians, he from Newcastle and she from Perth; however, they had spent much of their adult lives overseas. Eric trained as a physicist. After graduating BSc and MSc from the

University of Sydney, in 1933he completed a PhD under Lord Rutherford at the famous Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge. He taught Physics at University College, London, for the next 21 years (1934–1954). He spent another six years (1954–1960) as the Principal of the Kumasi College of Technology in Ghana, and then six more (1960–1966) as the Colombo Plan Professor of Physics at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi. His final posting was to PNG, where he served as the inaugural IHTE Director 1966–1971.

Eric and Olive retired to Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex, where Margaret and I visited them in 1974. (They had generously invited us and our three children to spend a weekend with them there.) They later moved to Wootton, a small village near Woodstock in Oxfordshire, where they spent the rest of their lives. Eric and Olive were a kindly couple who were greatly solicitous of the welfare of the Hitech staff. They were universally admired and respected because they encouraged our career aspirations and took a personal interest in our families and our achievements. Many of us benefited from their warm-hearted support.

Eric was a wise, highly accomplished academic administrator. He mightn't have thought so, but his great life achievement was to bring Hitech into being. Starting from nothing, he planned the IHTE faculties and departments, organised an administration, recruited the necessary staff, persuaded students to enrol, superintended the construction program, liaised with the PNG and Australian governments to secure the necessary funding, and gave Hitech a sense of purpose and direction. By the time he retired at the end of 1971, Hitech was a vibrant, growing university-type institution.

Eric must have felt deeply gratified when he presided over his final degree conferral ceremony in late November that year. About 60 students received their degrees and diplomas in Accountancy, Business Studies, Engineering and Surveying from the distinguished Hitech Chancellor, Sir Louis Matheson, the Vice Chancellor of Monash University in Melbourne. It was our third annual graduation ceremony, with the numbers of graduands increasing by leaps and bounds with each passing year.

Since then many thousands of students have graduated from Unitech. An online check just now reveals that Unitech held its 55th graduation ceremony on 5 April 2023. Almost 650 graduands received degrees and diplomas in fields as diverse as Accountancy, Agricultural Science, Applied Chemistry, Applied Economics, Applied Physics, Architecture, Building, Business Information Technology, Business Management, Civil Engineering, Communication for Development, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering (Communications), Electrical Engineering (Power), Food Technology, Forestry, Geographical Information Science, Mechanical Engineering, Mineral Processing, Mining Engineering, Property Studies, Rural Development, and Surveying. That number of graduands was down on previous, pre-'Covid' years, when 900 or more often graduated.

General Studies

The degree in 'Communication for Development' listed above is a BA (Comm. Dev.) offered by the Unitech School of Communication and Development Studies. This school, which has a professorial head, is the direct lineal descendant of my old department, the Department of English founded by Peter Botsman.

As the title suggests, the school teaches a curriculum combining both Communications and Development Studies. 'Communications' is the current academic name for what would once have been called 'English Language' or 'English Expression'. This is a subject aiming to strengthen students' written and oral expression, improve their reading comprehension skills, and help them effectively use available technologies for sharing their ideas with other people.

'Development Studies' is a multidisciplinary subject dealing with the political landscape of countries that are modernising and trying to catch up with the economically advanced nations. It draws on perspectives from various disciplines, including political science, economics, public administration, sociology, anthropology, history, geography, management, social work and community development.

Helping the Hitech students improve their skills in 'Communications' was what early English Department staff like Peter Botsman, Pamela Riley, Des Cooper, Joan Michie and Sue Argent did so very well. I don't count myself among this illustrious company because in my second year at Hitech, 1969, I began teaching a new subject — General Studies. This was a wide-ranging two-semester subject taught to all first-year Hitech students. In Australia, it might have been called Social Studies, because it combined elements of history, politics, civics, demography, economic development, international relations, and current affairs. It was introduced after Peter Botsman persuaded the Academic Board of its need. He argued that the Hitech students should be more broadly aware of the factors contributing to PNG's rapid social change; further, they needed additional general education before confining themselves to their narrow occupational specialisations.

Peter entrusted the new subject to me because my interests and postgraduate studies were leading me in that direction and away from English language teaching. I wrote a syllabus for the subject, submitted it to Peter for his approval then circulated it to the other teaching departments to indicate what I planned to teach. I also invited their feedback. Most responded favourably. "I wish I could take that course," one Engineering lecturer wrote.

I taught only General Studies during my later years at Hitech-Unitech. As student numbers expanded, Joan Michie joined me, and she, too, was soon teaching it full-time. Even though it wasn't related to the students' professional disciplines, most of them enjoyed it. That was because we taught it through lively free-wheeling class discussions. We didn't burden them with onerous assignments, though we probably required them to write a 500-word essay each semester, while the two-hour exams at the end of each semester gave them ample choice between topics and required only paragraph-length answers to questions. We passed nearly everybody and so our failure rate was low. A 'soft option'? Yes. It wasn't, however, a prerequisite for progression into second year.

Unitech's present Development Studies program will be an elaborate successor to the General Studies subject that Joan and I taught. That's something which pleases me greatly because it means we initiated something that has continued. It survives, presumably, because there's a need for it. What surprises me is that it has lasted so long — 54 years now. At the April 2023 graduation ceremony, 21 Unitech students received their BA (Comm. Dev.) degree certificates after successfully completing their four-year full-time course. And that suggests that 'Communication for Development' is a popular choice for school leavers wanting to earn a 'useful' BA degree at university.

An alternative way of viewing the longevity of the School of Communications and Development Studies is to see it as a case of institutional persistence. Once a subject area has come into existence, its teaching staff will fight hard to justify its retention. They will find cogent reasons why it must not be done away with. These will be in addition to their own job security. In a technological university, a 'liberal arts'-type discipline must strive to demonstrate how 'relevant' it is and what its practical benefits are. The present School of C&DS does that by arguing that its graduates have been trained to *'competently communicate, negotiate, disseminate information and resolve conflicts concerning the development of Papua New Guinea's natural resources'.*

Margaret, Rosie, Tony and Katie

Margaret, Rosie and Tony were essentially in Lae because that's where my job was. Katie — Catherine Jane Willis — was born 14 months after we'd settled there. All four of them lived lives of their own in Lae.

Before we'd left Brandi, Margaret had secured a transfer to the Bulae Primary 'A' School, a few blocks away from the Dowsett units on the corner of Bumbu and Huon Road. It was the second of Lae's two Primary 'A' schools, the first being on Coronation Drive on the edge of the town centre. The large majority of the pupils, perhaps 85 per cent of them, were Europeans; most of the rest were Chinese, with always a few 'mixed-race' children, commonly with a European father and Papua New Guinean or Chinese mother. All the staff were Europeans. Because it followed an Australian curriculum it was little different to primary schools in large Australian country towns.

Margaret started teaching at Bulae the week after we'd arrived in town. She was assigned one of the two Grade 5 classes. She soon realised that her class contained all the problem children — the less bright, the disruptive, those with behavioural and personality disorders, and the Chinese (whose English was poorly developed). The Grade 5 classes had been streamed by academic achievement and 'special need'. The other Grade 5 teacher, a young woman who was the daughter of a local plantation owner, belonged to the town's self-ordained social elite. As well as the other plantation proprietors, this group included the doctors, lawyers, bank managers, pharmacist and prominent 'Old Lae' citizens. This last group comprised a few 'Befores' (pronounced 'Bee-fores'), people who'd lived in the town before World War II; it also included those who'd mostly arrived in town in the months following the war, when civilians were allowed back into PNG as civilian administration succeeded military rule in 1946. Such people believed that privilege was their due. It would not have occurred to Margaret's fellow Grade 5 teacher that streaming the Grade 5 pupils and placing all the most difficult pupils in Margaret's class was not only educationally unsound but unfair.

As for the headmaster, he was rarely seen around the school. Margaret only vaguely remembers him and cannot recall his name. She does remember that in the year she taught at Bulae he never held staff meetings. Nor did he visit her classroom, ask what progress she was making with her difficult class, view her weekly work program, or inquire how she was faring with her duties. As he didn't teach a class himself, I wonder what he did with his time.

Rosie began school at Bulae with Margaret. She was in the Kindergarten class taught by Mary Womersley, the wife of John Womersley, the Director of the Lae Botanic Gardens and a professional friend of my father. We placed Tony in the Lae Day Care, a commercial child-minding centre a couple of blocks east along Bumbu Road. He was looked after there until Margaret collected him each afternoon after she'd finished at Bulae.

Margaret did not enjoy her year at Bulae. She remembers it as the most stressful in her 37-year teaching career. She was glad to leave the school at the end of the year. By that stage she was six months pregnant with Katie; and we were due to move to our new house on the Hitech campus early the next year.

Margaret returned to full-time teaching in 1971. She was appointed to the staff of the Primary 'A' school at the Igam Army Barracks, five kilometres north of our house on the Hitech campus. She taught a composite Grade 2-Grade 3 class, with Rosie among her pupils. Rosie had difficulty in separating her mother in her different roles as classroom teacher and parent. If, for example, Margaret put a cross against a wrongly spelt word in her exercise book, Rosie would irritably blurt out, "You've just ruined my tidy page!"

Tony began school at Igam that year. His Kindergarten class teacher was one of our friends, Margaret Hansen, whose own two children, Laurie and Scott, were the same age and

in the same classes as Rosie and Tony. The Hansen and Willis children became close friends. Our children were also close friends of the four Kuder children, Jeanie, John, Geoffrey and Jenny, who were similar ages to our three. They were from the Bumayong Lutheran High School, adjacent to the Igam Barracks. The Kuders, with whom we socialised, were a missionary family from Niagara in upstate New York. The parents, Paul and Edna Kuder, several years older than us, were teachers at Bumayong. Paul was the son of Rev. Dr John H.F. Kuder (1906–1990), the inaugural Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG. Bishop Kuder, who helped me with my historical research, was based at the Ampo Mission on Lae's eastern outskirts and had come to PNG as a missionary in 1934.

In 1972 Margaret moved to the Taraka School, a new dual curriculum primary school established in temporary accommodation in a spare classroom block on the Hitech campus. 'Dual curriculum' meant that Taraka had both an 'A' stream for the European children and a 'T' stream for the Papua New Guinean children of the campus. In overall charge was Joy Oliver, a single woman several years older than Margaret, who taught the 'A' stream Grades 4, 5 and 6, leaving Margaret to teach the 'A' stream Kindergarten and Grades 1, 2 and 3. Teaching the 'T' stream grades were two Papua New Guinean teachers. One was a young Sepik chap who'd been at Brandi High School during our time; the other, who taught the grades parallel to Margaret's, was a Papuan bloke. She and he did some experimental exchange teaching together: while he took Margaret's class for music, she'd teach his reading. She also taught Tony that year, in Grade 1. He remembers her as being a strict disciplinarian who made no concessions to him as her son!

It was an important year in Margaret's professional development. She learned valuable lessons in school management that set her on the course to becoming a principal after we'd moved to Canberra. Not only was she helping establish a new school, but she also accepted responsibility for much of the school's organisation and management. Well known to all the administrative staff, she was the natural point of contact between the Hitech administration and the school. She was also responsible for liaising with the parent community. Joy Oliver, who travelled out from Lae each day, wouldn't come to the campus at night, leaving Margaret to represent the school at the monthly meetings of the Parent & Citizen group.

Margaret also organised the carnival that the P&C conducted to raise funds to buy reading books and sets of Cuizenaire rods (a Maths teaching aid). The Papua New Guinean parents *mumu*-ed (pit-roasted) a whole pig. Plates of roast pork were then sold. Margaret was kept busy serving platefuls to the customers. The PNG parents also put on a superb *singsing* dressed in traditional ceremonial attire.

Another of Margaret's initiatives was the construction of a *haus wind* — an open sided thatched shelter of bush materials to provide shade for the schoolkids during recess and lunch. To build it, she called in the PNG men of the P&C. They went into the jungle behind the school, cut down the trees required for the upright supporting poles and the framework for the roof, and soon erected a commodious village-style *haus wind*.

A few days later as Margaret was walking to the school one morning, a delegation of elders from nearby Kamkumung village approached her. *"Sori tumas, Misis, mipela gat tok long hevi bilong mipela,"* their leader said — "We regret we must discuss with you a matter of concern to us." It turned out that the P&C men had cut down the trees for the shade-house on Kamkumung land. Margaret apologised profusely, saying she hadn't known where her P&C chaps had obtained their poles and would have stopped them if she'd known they were trespassing on village territory. They graciously accepted the apology, saying that they knew that she and her husband were supporters of the local Lae village community; however, if the school wished to use village resources in future it must gain permission first.

Margaret also began meeting regularly with the Papua New Guinean mothers in their housing area on the eastern side of the campus. To hear their views and explain what the

school was trying to do, she went there to sit with them and chat informally about matters of common concern. At first, they were shy and withdrawn, but when they realised that she was serious about engaging with them, they were more forthcoming. They appreciated the school coming to them to talk about their children's education. Through activities like these, Margaret became as respected and well known to the Hitech Papua New Guinean staff and their families as she was among the European community at the campus.

At the beginning of 1973 Taraka moved into new purpose-built premises at the northern end of the campus. Joy Oliver had returned to Australia and so a new headmaster, Kent Logie from Western Australia, took her place. He'd earlier spent two years as the headmaster of another Primary 'A' School. (After returning to Perth in 1975, he lectured in Music Education at Curtin University for 25 years.) Margaret only worked with Kent for a term and so she didn't get to know him well. That was because at the end of the first term she suffered a severe attack of gastroenteritis. This triggered the onset of crippling polyarthritis. She had to spend a couple of weeks in hospital while the rheumatologist at the ANGAU Memorial Hospital took biopsies and conducted tests. It took her the best part of a term to recover and become mobile again. By the time she was ready to return to work, we were about to quit Lae to spend a year's sabbatical leave in Canterbury, England.

Meanwhile, along with Andrew Hind and three other Unitech children, Katie began preschool in 1973 at age 4. They spent several mornings a week at the Lae Preschool, opposite the Coronation Drive Primary School. Because it fitted in with my teaching timetable, I was one of the chief chauffeurs, driving them to the preschool and collecting them again afterwards.

Our Toyota 'Publica'

The car we brought to Lae with us, and drove for our first 2½ years there, was one we'd bought in Wewak in early 1967 when our VW beetle was about to fall apart. It was a pale green Toyota 'Publica' light station sedan. A four-seat, three-door model, it was powered by a 790cc two-cylinder air-cooled motor. It weighed only 580 kilograms (compared with the 1520 kg of my present Subaru 'Forester').

The Toyota served us well before we replaced it with a sporty Ford 'Capri' in mid-1970. As well as running us all round Lae and nearby environs, it took us up the Bulolo Road on numerous trips to places like Zenag, Mumeng, Bulolo, Wau and Edie Creek. It also took us on many expeditions up the Markham Valley Road and into the Highlands to places such as Kaiapit, Kainantu, Henganofi, Lufa, Ukarumpa, Goroka and Kundiawa.

It also survived various mishaps. They included slipping off the ford over the Bumbu River during an early excursion to the Hitech campus. This happened on the way home from a visit to the campus with a couple of students. To spare the long, slow and roundabout route through Chinatown and Butibam village, I'd taken the short cut over the Bumbu ford, where the water was only about 10 centimetres deep, albeit fast-flowing. We'd had no trouble on the outward trip, but on the return journey the back wheels spun off a slippery boulder slewing the rear end sideways into deeper water. After we'd got out to investigate, the students said they could push as I drove slowly in low gear. Fortunately, that worked although they got drenched. Another time the car rolled down a steep embankment and overturned outside the Dowsett units after I'd left it parked without the handbrake sufficiently engaged. Within minutes a large crowd of Papua New Guineans gathered. *"Olaman, olameri!"* they were exclaiming in surprise. 'Twas their good luck and mine that the car hadn't flattened any of them. *"Yupela inap long halivim mi stretim ka?"* ("Can you help me put my car the right way up?"), I asked. *"Maski wari!"* ("No trouble!"), they replied as a dozen of them rolled it back the right way up. A panel-beating job down both sides and the roof, but apart from that no

critical damage. Later that year I had a further accident on my way back home along the Markham Valley highway after a research trip into the Eastern Highlands. Rain was falling, which turned the dust along the longitudinal planks on one bridge into a greasy, slippery sludge. As I touched the brake to reduce speed, the front of the car skidded sideways off the planks, crashing against side-railing of the bridge. Severely dented left front mudguard, but no other damage. More panel beating!

On one other occasion, the 'Publica' protected us during an astounding electrical storm near Gabensis village on the Bulolo Road, about 15 kilometres south-west of the Markham River bridge. With Graham and Sue McLean, we'd gone there on a 'gummying' expedition — riding inflated truck tyre inner-tubes down the rapids of the local creek. Because a thunderstorm was rolling towards us, we cut short the gummying to head for home. We'd only just got into our cars when the storm struck. Bolts of lightning with simultaneous claps of deafening thunder seemed to be striking the earth all round us. One bolt struck a nearby hill then arced across our cars to strike another hill on the other side. We huddled terrified in the cars for the 15 minutes the storm lasted, praying that the next bolt wouldn't strike us. Mac (Graham), an electrical engineer with a special interest in lightning strike, was flabbergasted. He'd never experienced anything like it before.

During our first year in Lae, Margaret usually drove the Toyota to and from the Bulae school. She also dropped Tony off at Lae Day Care, then picked him up afterwards. With various other staff members, I travelled to and from the campus in a chauffeur-driven Hitech car. Eventually, as more of us required transport, Hitech obtained a mini-bus for ferrying staff members around town. I travelled on the mini-bus until we moved from the Dowsett units to our house on the campus in about April 1969, a few weeks after Katie's birth. After that, I walked to and from work each day — a leisurely 5-minute stroll.

Our Ramu Drive house

We moved to our new house on the Hitech campus in April 1969. On Ramu Drive opposite the thoroughfare leading to Saruwaged Drive, it had previously accommodated the Botsman family. As their family was expanding, they were allocated a larger new house immediately behind ours. We spent the next 4½ years living in the Ramu Drive house. We left it in August 1973 to take sabbatical leave in England. We expected to return to it, but never did. Instead, after our time in Canterbury in Kent we settled in Canberra, where we've been ever since. In April-May 1976 I spent several weeks living in the house again while undertaking my PhD research in the Unitech archives.

The Ramu Drive house, which is still standing, was a centre of much busy activity. We often had staying guests, we threw many parties, and we regularly entertained select guests at Margaret's elegant dinner parties. I wrote my MA 'Prelim' and MA theses in the study there, and that's where I turned my MA thesis into my first book.

We developed a garden on our large block, despite the lack of soil. Like much of the campus, the soil was largely fine river gravel because we were on the flood plain of the Bumbu River to the west and the awesome, raging Busu River to our east. The heavy rains would leave puddles, but these soon drained away into the subsoil. (Lae's annual average rainfall is a stupendous 4.43 metres (14 feet 6.5 inches) with 246 rainfall days yearly!) Wherever we've lived we've been shrub- and tree-planters. As well as the usual pawpaws, bananas and pineapples, at Ramu Drive we planted mango, avocado, custard apple and bush-lemon trees, coconuts, a pandanus palm and a stand of giant bamboo. Although the soil was poor, the high rainfall ensured that they all flourished. We soon had a forest developing around us. Beneath some of the trees we planted seeds of the famous D'Albertis creeper

(*Mucuna novoguineensis*), the 'Flame of the Forest', which grew vigorously, spread from one tree to another, and began producing its spectacular, cascading scarlet blossoms.

As well as the trees, we had wide lawns for the children to play on. Outside the back door we installed an above-ground 'Clark' swimming pool, in which they learned to swim. Further up the back yard I erected a monkey-bar for them to swing on and teach themselves various 'high-bar' acrobatic tricks. Nearby, I erected a thatched *haus wind* for them. This doubled as an entertainment area where we could enjoy late-afternoon gins-and-tonics with select guests, the lemon slices for which were from our own bush *muli* tree.

With their friends and schoolmates, who mostly lived in neighbouring houses, they made up their own games to entertain each other. One activity took place in the soft dry dirt under our house, which stood on concrete posts about 1.5 metres tall. They soon discovered that ant-lions, larvae of the lacewing fly, dug their distinctive conical traps in the dirt, then lay at the bottom of the trap waiting for unwary insects to tumble in. When an insect slipped to the bottom, the ant-lion would leap from beneath its thin covering of dirt and snatch the insect with its long, protruding jaws. Having discovered what ant-lions are, Rosie and Tony would collect small ants, beetles and spiders to drop into the traps to watch the ant-lions seize them. Another 'game' was to collect a plastic washing basketful of cane toads, which congregated under the houses, then release them into someone's swimming pool to watch them swim around trying to escape.

To our pleasure, our children were popular and had many friends both at school and on the Unitech campus. As well as Laurie Hansen and Jeanie Kuder, Rosie's special friends included Jessica Barker and Kristen Adams, who were in her classes at Igam and Taraka and lived nearby on the campus. Rosie was an outgoing, gregarious girl who made friends easily. One of her closest friends was Susan Doyle, the twin daughter of Wendy and Peter Doyle (1932–2022). Susan's twin was Julie; like Rosie herself, they both became teachers. To us, Rosie's friendship with Susan was a strange one because Susan was four years older than Rosie. Despite the age difference, we approved of the friendship because Susan was a sweet-natured, polite girl. Rosie told me recently that they just liked being in each other's company. Their favourite activity together was to erect a tent in Susan's back yard, then sit inside together reading Susan's collection of comic books.

Tony's best friends at Igam were Scott Hansen and Geoffrey Kuder. When Taraka opened, the Kuder children transferred there, so Geoffrey remained his best mate. At Taraka another of his close friends was Nicky Dale, but he had a wide circle of friends who included Brook Brown, Adrian Cooper, Tony Heron and Billy Quarrie, all of whom were nearby neighbours on the Unitech campus. Tony seemed to attend many birthday parties. Other boys apparently regarded him as good company. Attending other children's birthday parties naturally incurred a reciprocal obligation; and so when our own children's birthdays came round it would be our turn to run the parties.

Rosie and Tony also rode their 'dragster'-type bicycles around the campus. On Sunday mornings they rode them to the multiracial Sunday School run by Martin Moyupe, a Unitech student. Martin, one of the few Highlanders at Unitech in those years, was a Lutheran. He thought it would be a good idea for the European and Papua New Guinean kids on the campus to see more of each other and to form interracial friendships. I'm not sure how much religion they learned or how many friendships they made, but Rosie and Tony used to enjoy their Sunday morning sessions in Martin's Sunday School class in an empty classroom.

Although we were no longer church-goers, Margaret and I didn't mind our kids attending Martin's Sunday School. As well as wanting to support and encourage Martin, who was showing commendable initiative, we guessed that seeing more of the Papua New Guinean kids would be good for them.

In our first year in Lae, we'd regularly attended the Sunday morning services at the Resurrection Lutheran Church on 7th Street in central Lae. At that stage Lae had no United Church, successor to the Methodists; and the only other options were the Anglican and Catholic Churches, neither of which appealed to us. While we were taking part in the service in the church, our children were being cared for in the Sunday School next door. We stopped attending shortly before the end of the year after the Minister, a hot-gospelling pastor from Missouri, preached hellfire at us. He promised us that unless we truly repented of our sins we'd burn forever in a lake of fire in hell. At the end of the service, Margaret turned to me and said, "I don't believe that nonsense; and I'm not coming back!" "Nor do I," I replied; "and neither am I!" I stayed away from church for the next 16 years, until I felt the need to return. Margaret, however, has never returned. When we're in the UK, we go to church with Rosie and her husband, Jon, who's now a Methodist Minister at Buckie in northern Scotland, because we know that they appreciate us doing so; but I attend my local Uniting Church alone. We've reached a tacit understanding that neither of us endeavours to influence the other in matters religious.

The best time of the year for our children was always our annual return trip to Melbourne for the long vacation. Melbourne meant Christmas and piles of presents from their Vale and Willis rellies. Their grandparents always indulged them, and they had many aunts, uncles and cousins on both sides of their family to catch up with. On top of all that, they could sit watching television for hours on end. It was a great novelty for them because PNG would have no TV until 1987. Even though it was only black-and-white, they'd be up early watching the test pattern before the day's programs began.

Further education

I took my first tentative steps to becoming a professional historian during our first months in Lae. As mentioned, early in 1968 I enrolled as a part-time external student in the MA 'Prelim' course at UPNG. Also known as the MA qualifying course, and common in Australian universities at that time, it was designed to raise students with a three-year BA pass degree in History to the level of those who held a BA (Hons.) degree, i.e. a four-year degree in which they'd achieved at least a '2.1' or second-class honours (first division).

I resented having to undertake the Prelim because I thought my postgraduate DipEd was sufficient evidence of my academic capability. Some 56 years later I realise that Ken Inglis, the UPNG Professor of History, was correct in insisting that I must satisfactorily complete the Prelim before attempting the MA proper. In particular, I acquired the research and thesis-writing skills that equipped me for the greater challenge of producing my later MA and PhD theses. The Prelim, I eventually agreed, provided me with essential training for my subsequent career as a practising historian.

As the UPNG History Department had been in existence for barely a year, and was still feeling its way, no Prelim coursework as such had been designed. I was the first of the department's postgraduate students. Between them, Ken and two of his lecturers, Hank Nelson and the Rev. Dr Sione Latukefu (a Tongan Methodist Minister turned academic historian), cobbled together a program for me to follow. This comprised coursework in two examinable subjects and a 30,000-word dissertation on an approved topic of my choice. The subjects in which I would be examined were Pacific History and Theory and Methods of History.

I recall little of the coursework but remember being shocked by the questions I was expected to answer in the closed-book three-hour examinations at the end of the second year, 1969. The questions bore little relation to the coursework I'd undertaken. I could do little but extemporise, falling back on my general knowledge and common sense. Ken Inglis later told

me that my exam results had been 'borderline', but my dissertation had lifted me to the required level. If I'd been so inclined, I could have countered by pointing out that his department had exposed me to little coursework; there'd been no agreed textbooks; I'd received minimal supervision; and I'd had to answer examination questions on topics not covered in the coursework. I felt somewhat cheated by the coursework, especially in Theory and Methods of History. That's a subject that has always interested me deeply; and it's one that all serious historians must grapple with. It goes under various names, including 'Theory and Practice of History', 'The Craft of History' and 'Historical Methodology', but whatever the name the subject reduces to historiography or what History is and how historians are meant to 'do' it. That was something an aspiring historian like me needed to know.

All the time I was undertaking the coursework, I was also researching and then writing my dissertation. My topic was the 1930 expedition of the gold prospectors and explorers, Michael Leahy and Michael Dwyer, across New Guinea from the Ramu River headwaters to the Gulf of Papua. I'd met Mick Leahy, who lived at Zenag on the Bulolo Road about an hour and a half's drive from Lae. He was an impressive chap, and each of us had warmed to the other. He liked the idea of my doing a study of his 1930 venture and then going on in the eventual MA thesis to consider his subsequent major 1933 expedition through the Wahgi Valley to present-day Mount Hagen. He made available to me his daily diary and photographs from the 1930 expedition, during which he and Mick Dwyer were the first whites to visit all the many Highlands villages they passed through. I also sought out Mick Dwyer, who was living near Caboolture north of Brisbane, where he was growing roses commercially.

In my spare time, I visited many of the villages the two Micks had passed through to meet and interview the elderly people who remembered them. I also read what various anthropologists and linguists had written about the tribes the expedition had encountered. Collating all this material, my dissertation retraced the expedition, considered its impact on the village communities and assessed its contribution to geographical knowledge of the Highlands region.

Looking at the dissertation some 54 years later, I can see that my research was thorough and enterprising, and the dissertation well-structured and well written. Copies found their way into various university libraries around the world; and sundry scholars still refer to it. It was never published, but it's now available online in PDF format. Both the Leahy and Dwyer families were pleased with my handiwork. It was the first time an historian had examined their accomplishment in detail, and they thought the dissertation gave them the credit they deserved.

After completing my MA Prelim program in 1969, I began work on my MA thesis early in 1970. I decided not to continue with Mick Leahy's later exploratory travels because of sensitivities about these. Many Highlanders had been shot and killed in conflicts with the Leahy entourage; and Mick described their deaths in detail in his diaries, which are now held in the National Library of Australia in Canberra. I didn't relish having to write about such matters because I knew I couldn't do so objectively without causing offence to Mick, whom I respected greatly. My friend Jim Sinclair (1928–2017), a greatly respected *kiap* (patrol officer) and subsequently District Commissioner in the Eastern Highlands, counselled me against continuing my study of the Leahy expeditions. "The Leahys left a trail of blood from one end of the Highlands to the other," he pointed out, "so you can't write about them without seeing them accused of murder."

Jim was already an accomplished self-taught historian himself. He eventually published 33 highly readable books on the history of PNG. These included biographies, commissioned institutional histories, transport histories, regional histories and urban histories. Among them was *Golden Gateway: Lae and the Province of Morobe* (1998), an authoritative history of

Lae and the Morobe goldfields. The year it was published, 1998, Jim was awarded an honorary DLitt degree by ANU. This was at the instigation of two of my most respected PNG historian friends, Hank Nelson and Bill Gammage. Jim's doctorate was well merited. Not only had he written more histories of PNG than anyone else, but all his books were fine exemplars of the historian's craft.

I accepted Jim's advice. Instead of the Leahys in the Highlands, I tackled something closer to home — the history of Lae, especially that of the city's five traditional village communities, namely Ahi-Hengali, Butibam, Kamkumung, Wagang and Yanga.

My reasons for turning to Lae history were many and varied. First, I'd got to know Mrs Helene Holzknecht (née Schmutterer, 1917–2007), a daughter of the Lutheran missionary, Rev. Gottfried Schmutterer, the first white man to live in Lae permanently; and I enjoyed her stories about her girlhood on the Ampo mission near Butibam during the early 1920s. Second, through Helene I'd gained access to her father's annual reports on Ampo, which gave an account of his activities between 1910 and 1935. Third, I'd discovered that the UPNG Library, the National Library and National Archives in Canberra, and the Mitchell Library in Sydney held various documentary sources on Lae's early history. Fourth, various Lae citizens were 'Befores', and were happy to tell me about what the town was like back in the 1920s and 30s. Fifth, I'd got to know Muttu Gware and Steve Ahi, educated Butibam men of my age, who helped me meet the elders of the village, who in turn were happy to reminisce about the historical events they'd lived through. Sixth, my friend Hank Nelson in the History Department at UPNG suggested that my topic was an important one. And finally, Lae was virgin territory for me to explore because no other historians had ever written about the town.

I took three years to conduct my research, draft my 55,000-word thesis, get my UPNG supervisor, Dr Peter Bolger, to read and comment on my chapters, and finally have the final draft typed up, collated, bound and submitted to the UPNG examiners. The long thesis title is '*Lae ti Mala'hu* — Lae and its Local Villages: A history of the relationship that developed between the local villagers, the Lutheran mission, government officials and townspeople at Lae, Papua New Guinea, before the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1942'. After formally submitting the thesis in about August 1972, I ensured that copies went into the Unitech and UPNG libraries. I've just flipped through it again in the last half-hour. I realise it's a work of excellent scholarship. I can be pleased with this my first serious extended historical essay. I'm not surprised that the examiners passed it without demur.

At this point I must acknowledge the UPNG people who supported me during my time as an external student of the History Department. Ken and Amirah Inglis watched my progress with interest. Both were outstanding historians themselves, so I guessed that if they approved of my research and writing it must be reasonably good. Similarly, Hank Nelson and his wife Jan, like us a former secondary teacher, encouraged me greatly.

Another UPNG History Department couple whose friendship I've valued greatly have been the late Jim Griffin (1929–2010) and his wife Helga. Like the Inglises, both were historians. Jim, who always flattered me by calling me 'Digger', became a valued mentor. An expert on Bougainville, he became UPNG's third Professor of History. Jim was also the greatest master of English prose that I've ever known. His specialty was the short biography. Of all the 13,000 biographical essays in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* so far published, I think that Jim's profiles of Daniel Mannix (Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne), Mick Leahy (PNG explorer) and John Wren (entrepreneur and sports promoter) are the very best. Helga also contributed to the *ADB* and worked for many years as one of its team of research editors; and she continues advising me on the *ADB* entries assigned to me.

One exotic addition to the UPNG History Department was Dr Zedekia Ngavirue (1933–2021), a Namibian who lectured in History 1972–1978. After training as a teacher and social worker in Namibia and South Africa, 'Zed' graduated from the University of Uppsala in

Sweden and then completed his DPhil in Politics at St Antony's College, Oxford. Having consciously exiled himself from Namibia while it was controlled by the Apartheid-era regime in South Africa, he came on to UPNG after Oxford, bringing his wife and three young children with him. Zed arrived at UPNG as I was finishing my MA program, but we got to know each other reasonably well and instinctively liked each other. In 1981 'Dr Zed' (as he was known) returned to Namibia, where he became a manager with the Rössing uranium mine. After Namibian independence in 1990, he headed the new nation's planning commission 1990–1995 then served as the Namibian ambassador to the European Union 1995–2003. Zed died from Covid19 in Windhoek, the Namibian capital, at the age of 88 in June 2021.

In addition to these friends, I greatly appreciated the support of two other outstanding UPNG historians — Donald Denoon, who succeeded Ken as Professor of History, and Bill Gammage, a foundation member of the History Department. I also got to know David and Sue Hegarty well. David lectured in Politics at UPNG and Sue taught at Port Moresby High School. (Years later she also taught Katie at Wanniassa High School near our home in Canberra.) On different occasions all four of the couples I've mentioned, the Inglises, Nelsons, Griffins and Hegartys, kindly and generously provided me with hospitality and accommodation on my research trips to Port Moresby. I remain deeply grateful.

Most of. the UPNG people just named eventually settled in Canberra, where Ken, Hank, Jim, David, Donald and Bill all became senior ANU academics. Ken, Amirah, Hank and Jim have all died now. Except for Helga, I rarely see the others; however, when we do occasionally meet, usually at funerals, we greet each other warmly.

My MA degree was conferred at UPNG's fourth annual graduation ceremony in March 1973. I received my degree certificate from the UPNG Chancellor, Sir John Crawford, a pioneering economist who was the current ANU Vice-Chancellor. Looking on was the recently elected Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam. I'd been the first UPNG student to complete the MA Preliminary course in History; and I was the university's first MA in History. Margaret, who attended the ceremony, had bought my academic gown, hood and mortar-board as a gift. They're a present I treasure, even though, regrettably, I only ever got to wear them just the once.

The afternoon tea following the conferral ceremony was a spectacular tragi-comical farce. Before the ceremony, a troupe of traditional Motu singers from Pari village on Port Moresby's southern outskirts had entertained the large audience. As soon as they'd finished performing, they hotfooted it to the nearby dining room, where a lavish afternoon tea was already laid out. They not only helped themselves, but purloined whatever they could. The women filled their *bilums* with whole platterfuls of afternoon tea. As the guests entered the room, the women were still passing the food out the open window to their *wantoks* waiting outside. Margaret remembers seeing one woman shoving a whole large 'wheel' of cheese out the window to a pal on the other side. I reached the table at the same time as Sir John Crawford, Gough Whitlam and Ken Inglis (who was by now the Vice Chancellor), but it was already stripped bare. All that remained were a few limp lettuce leaves and picked over fishbones. We looked at each other in amazement, bewildered that the women's depredations had been so total and so brazen. Ken was clearly embarrassed but could do little other than usher his guests to the tea and coffee table, which remained unmolested.

A UPNG professor later tried to excuse the Pari women's theft of the banquet by arguing that it had been 'Motu custom'. Be that as it may, to me it represented something else — opportunistic, predatory tribalism at its worst. The tribal mentality was to 'look after your own mob; bugger the rest, and screw 'em for whatever they're worth!'

Being able to say at last that I was 'Ian Willis MA' was most gratifying. It meant I had hauled myself up to the same scholastic level as my other Unitech colleagues with masters'

degrees. It also prompted me to wonder about my chances of taking the next step up — becoming 'Dr Willis' by undertaking a PhD in History somewhere and, hopefully, follow that by spending the rest of my life as an academic historian in a convivial university. Cambridge? Oxford? ANU? That never happened, but (as later chapters will show) I did become a practising historian.

Katie's birth

By far the most important event of our six years in Lae was the birth of Catherine Jane Willis ('Katie') in the ANGAU Memorial Hospital at about 5.00 p.m. on Thursday 20 March 1969. As with Tony's birth in Wewak 3½ years earlier, I wasn't present for the birth. Indeed I wasn't even in Lae. That was because Katie arrived in her own good time, not mine. After I'd taken Margaret to the hospital, Katie seemingly took no interest in being born. Margaret went into labour, but then came out of it again. This happened several times over the next four or five days.

In the meantime, I managed well enough at home, looking after Rosie and Tony like the attentive Dad I hoped I was. I prepared their meals, got them bathed and dressed, took them to school and preschool, collected them afterwards, shopped for them and took them to see their mother in hospital. The only help I needed was in plaiting Rosie's hair each morning before school. I hadn't the faintest idea of how to do that, so I sent her next door to Hilary Hind with her brush, comb, hairclips and ribbons.

Meanwhile, too, an anthropologist friend of mine, Roy Wagner (1938–2018) from Northwestern University in Illinois, turned up with his wife and asked if they could stay several nights. As I'd stayed with them at their field site in Karimui in the southern Chimbu District 4½ months earlier, I agreed. A couple of days after their arrival, Margaret had come out of labour again, so I agreed to guide Roy and his wife on a day trip up the Bulolo Road while he tried out a car he'd hired. Perhaps Hilary and Robert Hind were unavailable because I arranged for Dowsett neighbours, Barry Carter and his wife, to collect Rosie and Tony from school and preschool that day and then care for them until I returned home late afternoon. Barry, a good friend and the part-time student counsellor at Hitech, readily agreed. When the Wagners and I returned from the trip at about 6.00 p.m., I went to collect the children. The Carters announced that Margaret had given birth an hour earlier. They said they'd continue minding the children while I went to the hospital.

After briefly returning to our unit to tell the Wagners what was happening, I drove to the hospital. Margaret announced that in my absence our new daughter had decided it was time to be born. In the end, she'd come in a hurry, so quickly indeed that her doctor, Brian Todd, didn't make it to the delivery. He turned up in his tuxedo and bow tie, on his way to some formal function, to find that the nursing staff had managed the delivery successfully without him. As a little girl, Katie was renowned for saying, "Do it myself!" That independent attitude had begun with her continually delayed entrance into the world. And ever since then I've been reproaching myself for my irresponsibility in having gone bush when Margaret needed me the most.

My thoughtlessness continued over the succeeding days. The Wagners tactfully departed the day after Katie's birth, the Friday. Foolishly, after visiting Margaret and Katie in the hospital that afternoon, I allowed my Hitech chums to take me to the Melanesian, Lae's best hotel, for celebratory drinks. This time Hilary Hind was caring for Rosie and Tony. I had far too much to drink, including a 'yard of ale', about 2½ pints (1.4 litres) of beer in a very tall glass with a bulb at the bottom, which the Hitech lads poured down my neck. Perhaps it was Robert Hind who brought me home. Much inebriated, I asked Hilary if she could care for

the children overnight. Fearing I'd be vomiting, I curled up in the front yard under our frangipanni tree, where I spent the rest of the night.

Next morning, ashamed, hung over and remorseful, I went inside, showered, freshened up, changed into fresh clothes, then collected the children from Hilary. After I'd given them their breakfast and dressed them in their Sunday best, I drove them to the hospital to greet their little sister. I don't remember much about it, but Margaret would have been overjoyed to see them again and to show off the latest addition to the family.

I'm not sure what Rosie and Tony made of their baby sister, but Margaret and I were delighted with the third and last of our children. She was a healthy, chubby baby with a shock of red hair. Unlike Tony, who was also born with red hair, Katie retained hers. It's greying now, sadly, but I'm still pleased that one of our children was a redhead, like their Mum. I'm not sure about Margaret, but nowadays Katie doesn't seem to mind that at the time of her birth her father was absent, coming back down the Bulolo Road with his American anthropological pals.

When Katie was about seven months old, she began wanting to crawl. She'd lie on her tummy, raise her head and make 'swimming' movements with her arms and legs. Our friend Sue McLean, a physiotherapist, made valiant efforts to persuade Katie to progress to the next stage, by raising herself onto her hands and knees. But Katie never did crawl. Instead, she 'bottom-shuffled', balancing with one arm on the floor and pulling herself forward with the opposite heel. Two of Katie's sons, Owen and Hamish, later got round exactly the same way when they were infants.

Peter Ryan

By the time Katie joined the family I'd become friends with Peter Ryan MM (1923–2015), the director of Melbourne University Press and a newspaper columnist. During World War II, and still in his teens, Peter had spent a year behind Japanese lines in the mountains of the Lae hinterland in 1942–1943. Working as a coast-watcher and *kiap*, his duties included observing and reporting on enemy movements in the region, and liaising with the village communities. He had been a warrant officer within the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), the Army organisation responsible for the wartime government of PNG's civilian population. Supported by a small team of New Guinean policemen and assistants, Peter twice escaped ambushes by Japanese patrols sent out to capture him. He was subsequently 'Mentioned In Despatches' and awarded the Military Medal for his Morobe District service.

In 1959 Peter published an account of his wartime experiences in a book titled *Fear Drive My Feet*. It soon became a classic — among the very best of the personal memoirs resulting from the Pacific War. It remained in print for the rest of Peter's long life. I read the book soon after arriving in Lae. It so enthralled me that I wrote its author a fan letter, telling him how much I'd enjoyed it. I also mentioned that as I'd recently moved to Lae, I hoped to visit some of the places he'd mentioned in the book. Peter responded kindly, saying that he periodically revisited PNG and would try to meet me the next time he did.

I met Peter soon afterwards, at the second Waigani Seminar in Port Moresby. This annual seminar series was conducted on the UPNG campus over the week 30 May–5 June 1968. The theme of the seminar was 'The History of Melanesia'; Peter was programmed to deliver a paper on the history of ANGAU. He was also a friend of my host and hostess, Ken and Amirah Inglis, with whom he'd attended the University of Melbourne over 20 years earlier. (The Inglises had kindly and most generously invited me to stay with them in their house on the Waigani campus.) I attended every session of the seminar, enjoying in particular Peter's presentation on ANGAU and Ken's on 'War, Race and Loyalty in New Guinea'. The seminar confirmed my wish to become an historian.

Perhaps midway through the next year, 1969, Peter wrote to say he'd be returning to PNG, planned to revisit Lae and would like to catch up with me again. He possibly visited us in our new house on the Hitech campus, and we might also have met for drinks in one of the two Lae pubs, 'The Melanesian' or 'The Cecil'. One outcome of the visit was that I agreed to Peter's request for me to drive him to Chivasing village in the mid-Markham Valley. Chivasing was the village where Peter's last patrol north of the Markham had ended in catastrophe in June 1943. Peter and his companions were ambushed and machine-gunned in the village by the Japanese after the villagers had betrayed them. Peter's commanding officer, Captain Les Howlett, had been killed, and he himself had been lucky to escape alive.

I recall that we visited Chivasing one Sunday afternoon. With us was Graham McLean, who'd come along for the ride. It was the first time Peter had been back there in 26 years. We drove into the village, parked the car and walked into the middle of the village square. A large crowd soon assembled around us to inquire why we'd come. We engaged them in friendly conversation, saying things like, "*Mipela lukluk nabaut tasol. Mipela laik save moa long olgera ples long Markham. Em I orait long yupela?*" (We're just looking around. We want to know more about the Markham villages. Is that OK with you people?)

The discussion went on amicably for about ten minutes, then Peter asked, "*Yupela ken tinktink bek long taim ol Japan i stap long hap?*" (Do you people remember when the Japs were hereabouts?) Nodding of heads and wary murmurs of assent. "*Yupela gat save long taim ol Japan i bin siutim wanpela masta bilong Australia long dispela ples?*" (Do you know about the time the Japanese shot an Australian in this village?) Instant recognition of what Peter was talking about. Mumbles of "*Ol lapun tru i save tasol*." (Only the really old blokes know about it.)

At that point Peter's audience realised that the chap asking all the questions was none other than the second Australian soldier caught in the ambush in their village so long ago. The crowd around us silently melted away. Within a few minutes, Peter, Mac and I were standing alone in the village square. Not a soul was to be seen. A deathly hush had descended on the village. We got back in our car and drove back to Lae. We probably joked about it, for example, "Well, that was one conversation they weren't too keen to join!"; "A few guilty consciences in that village!" "They won't be inviting us back any time soon!" etc.

Looking back on it after 54 years, I have mixed feelings about it. At the time, I thought I was in a great adventure with a war hero. I see things differently now because I know more about the ambush. (I've written about it at length in my most recent book.) The Chivasings were plainly embarrassed and ashamed; but they probably also worried that Peter might have come to exact vengeance and/or claim monetary compensation. Was Peter being cruel in shaming them thus?

Peter mightn't have known it, but some of the Chivasing men would have been present at the Malahang Gaol near Lae on Sunday morning 13 February 1944 to witness the public hanging of Tuya. It was Tuya who'd killed the injured Les Howlett. From Wagang village near Lae, Tuya had been convicted for murder. (Representatives of all the villages in the Lae hinterland, a crowd of 1300 people, were forced to watch this grisly spectacle.) Tuya had been the guide for the Japanese military police who set up the ambush. Probably on the instructions of the Japanese commander, Tuya had killed Howlett by clubbing his head with a rifle-butt then shooting him. He'd later boasted about this back in Lae. The memory of Tuya's execution would have been terrifying for the Chivasings. They would have known they were lucky that none of their own had been hanged alongside Tuya.

Perhaps Peter's gesture in showing the Chivasings that he'd survived the ambush was one way of exorcising his own demons. Perhaps, too, it eased his sense of guilt in knowing that he'd survived when his comrade had suffered a prolonged and anguished death. If so, I

hope his gesture had the desired effect. I also hope the guilty among the Chivasings could see it as a kind of just pay-back for their wartime treachery.

Peter had every right to feel bitter over having been betrayed. He would have believed that villagers more ethical would have tipped him and Howlett off before they entered Chivasing — "*Ol Japan i stap long ples. Moa beta yutupela ranwe kwiktaim!*" ("The Japs are in the village. It would be better for the pair of you to retreat quickly.") Peter would have known that if he'd been captured alive in Chivasing that day, he'd have been dragged back to Lae, roughly interrogated, tortured and then bayoneted into a shallow grave near the beach at Voco Point — the fate of earlier whites captured by the Japanese near Lae.

But if I'd been Peter, I probably wouldn't have wanted to rake over old embers like that. It's easy for me to say that now, so many decades later; however, that's how I now hope I might have responded if I'd been Peter at that time.

The next year, 1970, we saw much of Peter's 18-year-old son, Andrew, who had just finished his secondary education at Melbourne High School. Before going on to study Law at Melbourne University, he took a gap-year, much of which he spent in Lae working for Ansett Airlines and living in the Ansett hostel. Andrew came on several bushwalking trips organised by the Hitech Explorers' Club; and he joined us in gummying adventures on the Busu River.

At Peter's instigation, in 1974 Melbourne University Press released my first book, *Lae: Village and City*. It was the published version of my MA thesis. Because Peter retained a lively interest in the Lae region, he'd asked to read the thesis. He liked what he saw, then offered to publish it if I reduced its length and revised it so that it didn't read like an earnest thesis by a student being scrupulously correct in observing academic convention. I took about six months to do all that then paid a Unitech secretary to prepare a professionally typed manuscript. I submitted this to MUP in the weeks before I left Lae for sabbatical leave in England in August 1973. I read and corrected the page-proofs while we were living in Canterbury.

I saw the book for the first time in January 1975 when we returned to Melbourne after our 16 months in England. For an author, to see and hold one's published book for the first time is an exquisitely fulfilling experience. Perhaps it's akin to giving birth. After all the travail of research, writing, revision and seeing the manuscript through the production process, to hold one's 'baby' for the first time is a blissful feeling. As soon as I was able, I visited Peter in his MUP office at the top end of Swanston Street, Carlton, to say my thanks. He generously took me out to one of his famous long lunches at Jimmy Watson's wine bar, just around the corner in Lygon Street.

Lae: Village and City sold reasonably well but unfortunately was never stocked by Lae's one bookshop. If it had been, it would have sold many more copies. Online second-hand booksellers still sell it. It originally retailed for $10.80, but the going price is now $60. Allowing for inflation, that's about 70% of the original price. The book attracted favourable reviews and occasionally still does. *'Excellent read. All that I was hoping for. Thank you to the Author,'* one US reviewer wrote in 2017.

The book's publication was a signal event in my professional historian's career trajectory. It represented my transition from nervous thesis-writing postgraduate student to a more self-confident practising historian. I've remained deeply grateful to Peter ever since. For that reason, I've dedicated my most recent book, my twenty-third, to his memory. It's an extended account of the recapture of Lae from the Japanese in September 1943; and he enters the story at various points. It's due to be published on Remembrance Day this year following the 80th anniversary of the fall of Lae to the Allies. Its full title is *Operation Postern: The battle to recapture Lae from the Japanese, 1943*. Peter died eight years ago, but I trust that he'd have approved the book if he'd been able to see it.

Jave Bom

At the end of 1971 I became embroiled in an interdepartmental academic storm-in-a-teacup. It was over a second-year Business Studies student, Jave (pronounced 'Jar-vay') Bom, from near Finschhafen. I'd taught him the year before; and although he was quiet and unassertive, I knew he was diligent and bright. I learned that the Business Studies faculty members had voted to terminate his Unitech studies because of his indifferent recent exam results. I thought he deserved a second chance, so I remonstrated with several of the faculty members I regarded as good friends. Their minds were made up, however. Jave's time as a Unitech student seemed fated to finish.

The uncompromising attitude of my Business Studies colleagues surprised and perturbed me. They justified their decision on the grounds of 'academic standards'. Further, they'd been teaching Jave in professional subjects like economics, accountancy and marketing. They were the experts in those areas and I wasn't, they said, so it was none of my business. True as all that was, I couldn't help feeling that they were treating Jave as an academic statistic rather than a young man with aspirations that were about to be dashed. Most of them wouldn't have known how much hope had been invested in him. He would perhaps have been the only student from his mountain village in the Finschhafen hinterland who'd ever completed secondary school and made it to university.

I took my concerns to the very top — to Eric Duncanson. After outlining to him what was going on, I said I thought Jave Bom was the kind of hard-working, capable student whose case warranted reconsideration. I also said I feared that Jave was being sacrificed so that his teachers could demonstrate that by failing a particular percentage of their students they were maintaining high scholastic standards. "Oh," Eric responded, "I've always feared that this sort of thing might be happening!" He asked me to leave the matter with him while he made further inquiries.

Following the discussion that Eric had with Ray Middleton (1917–1999), the Business Studies faculty head, Jave was reinstated in his course. Ray and his wife Orma were close personal friends of Eric and Olive Duncanson, who were of similar age to them. Ray would not therefore have been able to tell Eric to butt out of a matter that was not his to decide.

The matter was further complicated by the fact I was also a friend of both the Middletons. Like me, they were Methodists. I'd taught Orma *Tokpisin* in the classes I'd run for incoming staff members and their families in 1968 and 1969. I also knew that Ray had an exemplary war service record, and I respected him for that. (He'd served as a sergeant in the 2/28th Infantry Battalion of the Australian 9th Division in North Africa, but was captured by the Germans during the second Battle of El Alamein in Egypt in 1942. He'd then spent three years being shunted from one prisoner-of-war camp to another in Italy, Austria and Germany. Near the end of the war he'd managed to escape. He then found his way to an incoming American unit, who delivered him to the British.)

Ray protested to Peter Botsman that Ian Willis had been interfering in his faculty's affairs. After ascertaining from me that I'd acted in an individual capacity, not on behalf of our department, Peter defended me in an Academic Board meeting at which the Business Studies representatives indignantly raised the matter. They didn't succeed in having me censured in that forum, but the faculty then banned me from teaching its students. Peter was informed that henceforth Ian Willis would not be teaching Business Studies students. And there the matter ended, except for the fact that I no longer had friends within the Faculty of Business Studies. That didn't trouble me greatly. I knew I'd taken the right action to achieve a correct outcome. I couldn't have lived with myself if I'd stood by lamely and watched them axe Jave Bom.

As for Jave Bom himself, he knew that without me he wouldn't have continued at Unitech. I felt vindicated when he graduated at the end of 1973. By then I was on sabbatical leave in Canterbury. Someone wrote to say that he'd successfully completed his degree. The other three protagonists-in-chief in the contretemps had also departed the scene. Eric Duncanson had retired to Essex in early 1972; in early 1973 Ray Middleton had moved to Lismore in northern New South Wales to open the School of Accountancy and Business Studies at the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education; and Peter Botsman had left for America in late 1972 to begin his PhD studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, upstate New York.

By way of saying his thanks, Jave guided me on the 80-kilometre walk from Lae to Finschhafen one long weekend in 1972. It was a walk I'd always wanted to do. Fred Brown, a Unitech Maths lecturer who also wished to do the walk, joined us. We didn't walk the whole way because we were driven as far as possible out of Lae, perhaps 15 kilometres east of Unitech to the Buiem River, which was too wide and deep for our vehicle to cross. The foot-track beyond the Buiem ran inland, but we came down to the coast about 25 kilometres further east at Bukawa. Beyond Bukawa near the former Hopoi mission at Cape Arkona, we had to wade waist-deep through the sea for several hundred metres at the foot of the bluff below Hopoi. Fortunately there was little swell. I was puzzled by having to wade around Cape Arkona, but Jave told us that that was how the locals travelled because the alternative was a long and circuitous walk through the hills to the north. Back on shore, we walked from village to village on well-defined tracks, then overnighted in the *Haus Kiap* (official government rest-house) in Tamigudu village.

Next morning we had to wade again when crossing the Mongi River, a wide, swift-flowing stream of surprisingly clear water. That was another couple of hundred metres of waist deep wading. I was worried about crocodiles, but Jave assured us that none frequented that stretch of the river. After crossing the river, we still had another 30-kilometre march ahead of us before reaching Finschhafen, but it was easy walking along good paths from one village to another. We reached Finsch late afternoon. By the time the trip was done, we knew we'd had a long, hard walk, but we felt a sense of accomplishment in having completed it.

We stayed that night in Jave's parents' home. They were simple village people who'd moved down from their village to be near the job opportunities in Finsch. They were a little disconcerted at having a couple of *'mastas'* sleeping in blankets on their floor, but I guess we made it worth their while. The parents were grateful to me because they knew I'd saved their son from getting the chop at Unitech the previous year. Next morning we said our thanks, bade farewell, walked to the airstrip, and caught the next plane back to Lae.

Exploring the Saruwageds

My Lae to Finschhafen excursion was just one of many I undertook during my years in Lae. With various bushwalking buddies I roved far and wide seeking outdoor adventure while endeavouring to see as much of PNG as possible. I climbed Mount Wilhelm twice in 1968. At 4509 metres (14,793 feet), it's PNG's tallest peak, more than double the height of Mount Kosciuszko, Australia's highest, and often snow-covered. The first time I didn't get right to the top, so I returned several months later and that time reached the trig point at the summit. We couldn't see anything because of a dense fog, but by ascending the final pinnacle to the trig point we'd joined the legions of expatriates who liked boasting that they'd conquered PNG's highest mountain.

My favourite expeditions were those into the mighty Saruwaged mountains, which tower over the Unitech campus. The Saruwageds are the steep, rugged, high range immediately to the north of Lae. They form the spine of the Huon Peninsula. Their highest

peaks rise over 4000 metres. The tallest is Mount Saruwaged, the summit of which is 4121 metres (13,520 feet) above sea-level. Mount Bangeta, its nearby companion, is almost as tall, at 4071 metres (13,356 feet). To reach the summits, hikers usually fly into one of the two high airstrips near villages on the southern flanks of the range, either Bainduong or Kasanombe, both at an altitude of about 7000 feet (about 2134 metres). The upper limit for sweet potato cultivation is that height, so villages aren't built any higher.

From these highest villages various tracks lead up and over the range to the highest villages on the other or northern side. All routes across the range are difficult, dangerous and demanding. The perils include precipitous slopes, landslides, steep, slippery, narrow tracks, slimy logs bridging rushing torrents, paths that peter out, the dense, tangled rainforests, and hours-long deluges of rain.

The upper zone of the rainforest is the moss forest. It begins at about the 2800-metre (9186-foot) level and extends upwards to about the 3200-metre (roughly 10,500-foot) level. The moss forest exists because at that altitude cloud almost continually shrouds the range. It's a region where the canopy is so dense and the mists so heavy that sunlight rarely reaches the forest floor. Thick green moss blankets everything — rocks, soil, tree trunks and limbs. Long strands of moss festoon the branches. The spongey, saturated moss oozes moisture continually. The walkers' clothing is soon saturated too. The ground beneath the forest is deeply carpeted in a thick moss-covered layer of rotting vegetation that quakes beneath their feet. The dim light seems eerily green. The forest is strangely still and quiet because the moss inhibits airflow and deadens sound. All that walkers hear is their own laboured breathing as they clamber upwards, often from rock to rock, tree to tree and branch to branch.

Eventually the moss forest gives way to alpine grassland with occasional stunted trees and cycads. Reaching the open grassland is a relief after a couple of hours' toiling up through the moss forest. Walking across the grassland is not, however, easy because the grass is tussocky. A wrongly placed foot might mean a twisted ankle. The grassland in turn yields to a broad expanse of lichen-covered rocky, marshy ground and small tarns. This is what the villagers call *'antap tru'* — the very top of the broad plateau above the treeline.

Expeditions into the high Saruwageds are always hazardous. Campsites and shelters are few and far between. Severe weather conditions are the norm. Dense fogs reduce visibility to several metres as the clouds roll up from the valleys below each afternoon. Almost daily torrents of rain drench the landscape, ensuring that the tracks are always slippery and muddy. Fierce winds sweep across the bleak exposed plateau above the treeline. Periodic frost, and gale-driven hail, sleet and even snow are additional hazards for travellers.

With my Unitech bushwalking pals, 'the cobbers', I undertook various expeditions into the Saruwageds. Only two of these succeeded in reaching *'antap tru'*. The first, which I'll now outline, was at Easter 1972. Five of us — George Argent, Hector Clark, Neil Hardie, Gordon Holden and I — flew into Kasanombe and then trekked north-east towards Mount Saruwaged, keeping to the ridge-tops wherever possible. As on most of these trips, we engaged local carriers to carry our rucksacks up to the edge of the grassland. To our embarrassment, sometimes the carriers were women or kids in their early teens. They were better at carrying than we were, more sure-footed, and they always knew where the path was. Often we could discern no path at all, especially in the moss forest.

As we plodded through the tussock grass after leaving the moss forest, we were wet, cold, footsore and dispirited. In the late afternoon mist and drizzle, we knew that the peak of Mount Saruwaged was somewhere ahead of us. We were wondering where we might pitch our tents when, to our great relief, we saw a commodious 'hunting lodge' in a sheltered hollow ahead of us. It would have been built by villagers on the southern side of the range as temporary accommodation during their seasonal forays into the grassland to hunt wallabies and bandicoots. It was a substantial hut ingeniously constructed of bush materials. At an

altitude of perhaps 11,000 feet (3353 metres), it stood about 2.4 metres high and was some four metres wide and six metres long. Its pitched roof was thickly thatched with tussock grass. The walls comprised upright split logs driven into the ground. The inside walls were thatch-clad to minimise the draught. Except for a central earthen fireplace, the floor was covered with a deep, soft and dry layer of bracken-like fern. Best of all, the hut was warm and dry inside.

We soon had a billy boiling. We cheered up as we sat around our campfire drinking our mugs of steaming tea while our clothing dried out. After cooking and eating dinner, we chatted, recounting the highlights of our day's adventures while sipping Seppelt's 'Moyston' claret. This was a popular red wine from western Victoria. I'd brought along a bottle for just such an occasion.

After a comfortable night's sleep, we were up at first light, always 6.00 a.m. in PNG. We breakfasted and packed our rucksacks, which we left in the hut as we set out for the peak we imagined to be Mount Saruwaged, somewhere in the mist about 2000 feet (610 metres) above us. Guided by Gordon, who seemed possessed of an unerring sense of direction, we scrambled ever higher up an increasingly steep and rocky slope. After about two hours of brisk climbing, we knew we were near the summit of whatever peak we were scaling because above us we could see the trig point. We had little to view when we reached it because the fog was thicker than ever. We can't accordingly be sure we were on Saruwaged itself or simply another nearby peak. Whichever peak it was, beneath the trig point we found a small screw-top jar wedged between the rocks of the cairn on which the trig point stood. In it was a note written in both English and Japanese. This announced that a pair of Japanese hikers had been there about three months earlier. They'd been doing an east-west traverse of the range carrying 25-kilogram (55-pound) packs and scaling all the peaks along the way. Our own packs weighed only about 14 kilograms (30 pounds), so we realised that the two Japs must have been tough, very fit chaps. We added our names and the date to the note, replaced it in the jar, then put the jar back where we'd found it.

Retracing our steps, and making good time, we reached our camp at about 10.30 a.m. We shouldered our rucksacks to begin the long trek back to Kasanombe. Descending was much easier and faster that the uphill climb the day before. Following yesterday's footprints, we always knew where to go next. The only difficulty was that on steep, slippery slopes our feet often slid from beneath us, leaving us skidding downhill on our backsides. We reached Kasanombe at about 4.30 p.m. Gordon demonstrated how hardy he was by walking the last two hours with only his thick woollen hiking socks covering his feet. He'd developed blisters, so he tied his boots together, slung them round his neck and did without them.

Our charter plane wasn't due to collect us until about 10.00 a.m. the next morning, so we camped in the *Haus Kiap*, entertaining ourselves and the villagers by learning from them words in Nabak, their *ples tok*. The only one I can remember is *gasiet* (pronounced 'gar-see-yet'), which means 'good-bye'. As we were flying out the next day, we made sure to shout, *"Gasiet! Gasiet!"* to the crowd who'd come to see us off. *"Gasiet! Gasiet!"*, they yelled back as they waved.

Another thing I did while waiting for our plane in Kasanombe was run a first aid clinic. This was a habit of mine in villages where we overnighted. Because of their lifestyle, the villagers suffered many cuts and scratches on their arms and legs. These often became infected. I'd get out my first aid kit with its stock of 'Betadine' antiseptic ointment and 'Band-Aids'; then I'd sit on the steps of the *Haus Kiap* and begin dressing the sores of anyone who came forward for treatment. Guessing that I was a *Dokta Boi* (medical assistant) sent by *Gavmin* (the government), they'd soon form a long queue and keep me busy for as long as my supply of 'Band-Aids' lasted.

In writing of Kasanombe, I should describe its impossibly steep airstrip. This is built below the village on a narrow ridge running down to the deep Tuembi River valley. At the top end, the strip meets a cliff face cut into the ridge. Planes landing at Kasanombe touch down at the bottom end of the strip, then apply full power to taxi to the top end at the cliff face. There, they turn sideways on to the strip while someone chocks both wheels back and front to prevent the plane from careering off downhill. On taking off again, once the chocks are removed, the plane races downhill and becomes airborne as it leaves the strip and flies out over the Tuembi valley. People at the top of the strip can't see if the plane has become airborne because it immediately drops into the valley below the line of sight. Once airborne, the plane does a left-turn, follows the Tuembi valley down to the junction with the Sanem River. Turning left again, it follows the Sanem Valley down to the Sanem's confluence with the Busu. The Busu Valley is then followed all the way to Lae. After becoming airborne, the plane is in continual descent all the way home.

On one occasion a party of us were landing at Kasanombe after heavy rain. The pilot landed his aircraft successfully but his engine lacked the power to taxi up the heavy, soggy turf of the strip to reach the top end. We four passengers all had to clamber out and push the plane to the top end as the pilot applied full power.

A night sleeping in the open

On one occasion in 1972 Hector Clark and I, with Hector's 17-year-old daughter Klara, spent a night sleeping in a cave-like hollow beside the Bunga River east of Lae. That was after we couldn't complete a spur-of-the-moment and unplanned bushwalking excursion we'd foolishly undertaken one afternoon.

We'd walked into the Bupu River headwaters in search of a mountain lake I'd seen from the air on various flights in and out of Lae. Nowadays, with the aid of Google Maps, I can find the lake easily online. At an altitude of 700 metres (2297 feet), it's about 340 metres long and 235 metres wide and is situated in the hilly, heavily forested divide between the Bupu and the next river to the east, the Bunga. From the air, the lake resembles a back-to-front and tilted 'letter-D', with the straight side forming the south-eastern shore, thus:

On maps the lake is nameless, but it must have a local name because only two kilometres to the north is Kaisia, a hamlet of about 20 houses in a clearing. Another couple of kilometres north of Kaisia is Melanpipi, another hamlet. The maps show a track leading up the western bank of the Bunga to the two hamlets and nearby gardens. At the time I knew none of this because the maps I had then lacked the detail of those now available.

After climbing the precipitous slope above the Bupu headwaters, we decided not to return the way we'd come. That was because as we clambered up one almost perpendicular rock wall near the top of our ascent, I'd dislodged a huge rock. About a metre across, it dropped on to a ledge that I'd just climbed from. Klara was now standing on the ledge about three metres below me, with Hector just behind her. The rock landed beside her, broke into fragments and hurtled into space. Our guardian angels were working overtime that day because, miraculously, both Klara and Hector remained unscathed.

After reaching the ridge top about ten minutes after this near-miss, we couldn't find the lake. We must nevertheless have been within several hundred metres of it. It lies within a basin hemmed in by tall, dense rainforest, so it would have been easy to miss. At reaching the ridge top, we seemed to be at the edge of a broad forested plateau. Rather than retrace our

footsteps back to the Bupu, we made our way east across the plateau until we came to the Bunga headwaters. We planned to follow the Bunga south to the main road. We'd then have an easy 8-kilometre walk back to where we'd left our car near the ford over the Bupu.

That's more or less what we did but, unbeknown to me, the Bunga runs through a deep gorge before reaching its flood plain. We trekked down the eastern side of the Bunga, the opposite side to the track into the aforementioned hamlet, which I knew nothing about until I recently found it online in Google Maps' satellite images. The ground sloped steeply to the right of us as we worked our way downstream. We only realised we had a gorge on that side after one of us dislodged another large rock. It went bounding downhill smashing through the undergrowth. When it fell silent, we guessed it had finished its descent; but several seconds later we realised it had been in free-fall because we heard its echoing boom as it crashed into the bottom of the gorge.

Fearful of falling to our deaths, we didn't venture down to the brink of the gorge to see how deep it might be. We continued our easterly trek for a couple of kilometres, keeping the river well to our right. Eventually guessing that the land was levelling out, and that we'd hopefully bypassed the gorge, we made our way down the steep slope to the river. Night was falling as we reached the water, really only a rocky creek a couple of metres wide. We were beyond the gorge but on either side the steep-sided valley rose above us for several hundred metres. Large boulders littered the creek bed; numerous trees had fallen across the river. Pushing on downstream in the dark without torches would have been foolhardy, so we opted to spend the night where we were. Conveniently, several metres above the river one fallen tree had left a large cavity behind its upturned roots. This cave-like hole offered protection from the weather. It seemed in no danger of collapse and had room for all three of us to stretch out inside, so we clambered in to begin our 12-hour vigil until the dawn.

We spent a long and uncomfortable night in our refuge, dozing fitfully, plagued by mosquitoes. Hector tells me his abiding and treasured memory is of the phosphorescent fungi glowing in the dark around us as he propped up Klara, who was snoozing beside him. I don't recall the wondrous display of bioluminescence, but I do remember swatting mosquitoes continuously and worrying about the anxieties our wives and children must be experiencing back on the Hitech campus.

At first light, 6.00 a.m., we quit our hidey-hole to resume our trek back to the road. We had several fallen trees and boulders to scramble over but few other hazards as we made our way downstream. Within a half-hour we'd reached the bend where the Bunga swings south to enter its gravelly flood plain then make its approach to the sea, which it enters on the western side of Singaua Plantation. We felt an enormous sense of relief as we stepped from the gloom of the forest into the sunlight and the broad, flat, open expanse of the flood plain.

After another half-hour trudging south over the gravels of the flood plain, we saw four blokes in the distance marching resolutely upstream towards us. We guessed they were a rescue party from Hitech. As we neared them we could see they were Jack Woodward, Neil Hardie, Gordon Holden and Steve Kormilo.

Drawing level, they continued marching upstream, pretending not to have seen us. They doubled back after about five metres, then began throwing questions at us. "What on earth have you been up to?" "Are you OK — no injuries?" "Why didn't you tell someone what you were planning?" "You mean to say you went trekking through those mountains without map, compass, food, water, protective clothing, matches and a first aid kit?" "Do you realise that everyone back at Hitech is frantically worried about you?" "You do recognise that you've been appallingly irresponsible?" etc etc etc.

We tried to look appropriately chastened as well as relieved to see them. We were also reassured to know they'd come looking for us. Mateship in action! I probably asked how they'd known to look for us along the Bunga rather than the Bupu. The answer would have

been that as soon as they'd found our car parked beside the Bupu they'd have guessed we'd decided not to come back that way and had then got lost after pushing on to the Bunga,.

Within an hour we were back home on the campus, each of us making our apologies to our families, enjoying a cup of tea and taking a long shower to remove the grime of our unexpected night out in the Rawlinson Range foothills.

I've remained fascinated by the nameless 'D'-shaped *'raunwara'* ('round water': *Tokpisin* = lake) in its secluded hollow between the Bupu and Bunga headwaters. Periodically I 'visit' it via the Google Maps satellite view. If I were a fit young fellow, I'd wish to walk up the track to Kaisia to ask the people there about it. What's its name? How deep is it? Can you swim in it? Are there fish in it? Most unlikely, but do crocodiles live there? Is there a track into it? How often do you visit it? Have any 'whitefellers' ever been there? Does it ever overflow and send its waters cascading into the Bunga? Do you have any stories about it in your folklore? Can one of you guide me there? And so on until my curiosity was satisfied.

Gummying

Another of our pastimes was gummying on the Busu River. As explained, gummying involved shooting the rapids on the inflated inner tube of a truck tyre. The word is from the German *Gummi*, rubber, which had come into *Tokpisin* as the name of any kind of tyre.

Our favourite gummying run was from the bridge across the Sankwep River, the Busu's first major tributary going upstream, down to the Busu bridge on the main road running east from Lae. This provided a thrilling four-kilometre ride down the Sankwep and Busu. The first stage comprises the descent down the Sankwep cascades, white-water all the way, the river plunging down a series of steps over successive boulders. The Sankwep then joined the mighty Busu, which at that point was 50 metres wide and surging seawards at about 10 knots or 18.5 kilometres an hour. When the Busu was in flood, it flowed even faster and was a terrifying sight. Gummying on the Busu then would have been suicidal, so we only gummied after a dry spell, when the river was at lower ebb.

Most of us gummyers had tales to tell of near fatal mishaps after our gummies had capsized. My own occurred as I was approaching the Busu bridge near the end of one run. About 50 metres upstream, the river flowed over a submerged boulder. On the downstream side was a 'haystack', i.e. a backward rolling wave that continually breaks as the foaming water recirculates and dumps itself on the upstream side. Experienced white-water rafters and canoeists avoid haystacks, preferring to paddle round the obstruction causing them. This haystack was not a large one, so I chose to ride over it. The gummy immediately flipped over. I found myself being whirled round and round in turbulent water so frothy I couldn't get purchase on it to swim out. The hole beneath the boulder was about three metres deep. The churning water tumbled me over and over in the hole as if I were in a giant washing machine. I was completely disoriented, unable to tell which way was up or down. As I was being swirled around, my feet suddenly touched the bottom, so I kicked off vigorously. The current then caught me and swept me clear. I still had my arm around my gummy, so I shot to the surface like a ping-pong ball then made for the nearby riverbank, where I sat until I'd regained my breath.

On another occasion I thought I'd lost my brother David, who was visiting us from West New Britain with his family. David's gummy was slowly leaking air. The further we went, the less buoyant it became. After it capsized on a pressure wave, he and his gummy disappeared. I was following about 20 metres behind, but as I swept past the place where he'd vanished there was no sign of him. I was beginning to wonder if I'd have to return home to tell Lucy (my sister-in-law) that she no longer had a husband, when he suddenly resurfaced,

about 100 metres downstream from where he'd gone under. He was coughing up water and gasping for breath, but, thanks to providence and his own presence of mind, he was still alive.

At that stage we didn't know just how treacherous the Busu was. If we'd read the official histories of World War II, we'd have known that 15 soldiers of the Australian 9th Division were swept away and drowned while trying to ford the Busu during their advance on Lae in September 1943.

We learned about that event through our Education Corps friends at the Igam barracks. They challenged us to a gummy race down the Busu. They intended using a raft they'd made by tethering together about eight gummies. Before venturing forth upon the Busu, they'd been practising with it on the Igam swimming pool. One day the Army commander visiting from Port Moresby saw it floating there. "What's that contraption?" he asked. He was told it was the raft the Education sergeants would use in a race down the Busu. "No they won't!" he ordered; "no troops under my command will go white-water rafting on the Busu! I was here in 1943 when 9th Divvy lost 15 men drowned while crossing the Busu!"

The detritus of the war

As in Wewak, so in Lae: the detritus of World War II was part of the local scene. Reminders of the war survived around Lae for decades. The hulks of wrecked barges rusted away on the beaches and reefs between Lae and Finschhafen. The prow of the *Tenyo Maru*, a bombed-out Japanese cargo vessel that beached off the end of Lae aerodrome in 1942, rose ten metres above the waves until the ship eventually slid into the depths 30 years later. At Tsili Tsili west of Nadzab, aircraft lay abandoned among the kunai grass beside the overgrown former aerodrome. As mentioned, near Ahi-Hengali village a gun barrel embedded midstream in the gravel of the Bumbu River was a deceptive, dangerous obstacle for kayakers shooting the rapids. My own encounter with this hazard was the closest I've ever come to drowning.

Collecting the detritus of war around Nadzab was the hobby of Andrew Doyle and Frank Woodward, lads in their early teens who were the sons of my Unitech friends, Peter and Wendy Doyle and Jack and Mary Woodward. As well as discarded helmets, rifles, bayonets and shell casings, Andrew's and Frank's hoard included clips of live ammunition and trophies such as undetonated grenades, mortar bombs and 25-pounder shells. While I admired their enterprise, it worried me. I used to tell their parents that after some 30 years of being exposed to the elements, live munitions of that kind might be unstable, could explode spontaneously at any time and might detonate if dropped. Eventually the boys' more dangerous collectibles were confiscated. Jack took them to the Igam Army barracks in a car trailer cushioned with sandbags so that the bomb disposal squad there could deal with them.

In 1972, Paul, a young man from Mumeng, the English Department's office assistant, suffered debilitating injuries and permanent brain damage in a freak accident at a remote corner of the Unitech campus. During a lunch break, Paul was visiting a vegetable garden he was cultivating near the university gravel pit. Unbeknown to him, a munitions disposal squad from Igam was about to detonate unexploded ordnance left over from the war. As Paul approached, shrapnel from the explosion smashed the crown of his head. He spent months in hospital and never recovered fully. He had to learn to walk again but could do so only unsteadily and with difficulty. John Reardon, who ran the Unitech printery, took up Paul's case and on his behalf secured a large compensation payout. Paul, who was married and had several young children, didn't enjoy this windfall for long. His *wantoks* grabbed most of it. Thirty years on, the war was still claiming victims.

Pangu Pati

If I'm remembered at all in Lae, it will be for my involvement in Pangu, the political party that took PNG into self-government in 1973 and independence on 16 September 1975. 'Pangu', its name the acronym for 'Papua and New Guinea Union', had formed in 1966. Its principal founders were Tony Voutas and Michael Somare. Tony was a *kiap* from Goulburn, north of Canberra. His Greek surname reflected his parentage: Greek father, Anglo mother. As seen in the previous chapter, Michael was a Sepik from the Murik Lakes. His father had been a policeman, and he himself had trained as a teacher and taught at the Brandi school before becoming a broadcaster at Radio Wewak.

Tony was living in Lae when I first got to know him in 1969. He knew I was sympathetic to Pangu's aims and agreed that PNG should be granted independence sooner rather than later. Early in 1971 he came to me and asked if I'd be willing to become a Pangu candidate in the forthcoming elections for the inaugural Lae City Council. The Hitech campus and adjacent Taraka housing development would comprise one of the wards, 'Haitek'. Because I knew the area and got on equally well with Hitech's expatriate and indigenous staff, Tony thought I'd be the ideal candidate. I agreed to his request, joined Pangu and began attending the weekly planning meetings he was running for the Pangu candidates.

Apart from Tony himself, I was the only 'whitefeller' at these meetings, which were conducted in Pidgin. Tony, who implicitly believed in democracy and instinctively practised it, ran meetings which demonstrated that despite their diverse tribal and regional affiliations and varying levels of education, Papua New Guineans could manage their own government. Inspired by his example, I worked with my fellow candidates to plan the Pangu campaign.

Fearing independence and the loss of privilege which that might entail, the expatriate businessmen of Lae formed their own party, the PCA. I can't recall exactly what this acronym stood for, but perhaps it was something like 'Progressive Citizens' Association'. As their candidate for the Haitek ward, the PCA chose Murray Falkiner, the head of the finance and accounts branch of the Hitech administration. Murray, an amiable chap, was a neighbour of ours. His two daughters attended the Igam school with our children, and we knew his wife through meeting the Falkiners at various social functions on the campus.

A third candidate entered the contest as an independent. I forget his name, but he was a Hitech student in his second-year of a Business Studies course. From Finschhafen, he was a nephew of Zure Malik Zurenuoc, the former member for Finschhafen in the first House of Assembly 1964–1968, and also of the Rev. (later Bishop and Sir) Zurewe Zurenuoc, who in 1973 became the first Papua New Guinean bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG.

I campaigned strongly, conducting various meetings on the campus and nearby Taraka estate. My chief support came from the Papua New Guinean labourers, drivers and low-level technical staff living in the 'dongas' (low-cost housing estate) on the eastern side of the Hitech campus. There my chief supporter was Kabi Mandi, a voluble, wily Finschhafen man in his early 50s who was a Unitech driver. One of our older workers, he was married to Neneu, a Manus woman, and they had six children. He'd been a young man, an indentured labourer, at Bulolo when the Japanese invaded Lae and Salamaua in March 1942. After escaping the Japanese bombing of Bulolo, he'd walked back home to his village near Finsch.

I first got to know Kabi early in 1971. One Sunday afternoon after I'd finished a gummying run on the Busu, I was sitting in the sun drying off on the gravelly beach below the bridge. Kabi was there with a couple of his kids watching the river flow past. Recognising each other, we began chatting. The conversation turned to the forthcoming council election. In his rapid-fire *Tokpisin*, Kabi began talking about his hopes that PNG would one day be

independent. He'd attended mission schools and become literate in Kâte and *Tokpisin* but not English; he'd grown up under the pre-war Australian colonial administration; and he'd survived the war, during which ANGAU had conscripted him as a carrier. After the war, he'd learnt to drive and was proud of his driving skills, but he hoped his children would receive a better education and work in better jobs than he had. He also wanted them to be considered the equals of the expatriates, the whites and Chinese, who were doing better out of PNG than 'natives' like him were. My response was that Pangu Pati shared his hopes, and that was why it was running a team of candidates in the council elections.

A few days after this conversation, Kabi came to visit us. He said he wanted to continue the conversation — *"Mi laik toktok moa!"*. Over afternoon tea we spoke about PNG's progress towards self-government. Before leaving, he said this had been the first time he'd ever been in a white person's home. He thanked us for inviting him in and serving him afternoon tea, then walked back home across the campus. After he'd gone, I realised that he'd been testing us, seeing if we really practised our ideals about racial equality. If I'd spoken to him on the front doorstep and hadn't invited him inside, he'd have known that I was *'giamon'* — an insincere hypocrite, saying one thing but doing something else. I'd passed Kabi's test, so henceforth he promoted my cause strongly among his fellow PNG Hitech employees.

Perhaps inevitably, the campaign turned nasty. Murray Falkiner's staff worked hard to ensure that their boss became the Haitek ward councillor. Murray, who wore a luxuriant but well-trimmed moustache, *'mausgras'* (mouth grass) in *Tokpisin*, was nicknamed 'Murray Mausgras'. His staff members' campaign slogan was *'Get with the class — vote Murray Mausgras! If you agree, put Willis 3'*. They thought this was hilarious. One of them told me they wanted me to come last in the election. They plastered the campus with posters bearing Murray's portrait. I got my own back one evening, childishly, by sneaking into their office and pinning up multiple copies of my own campaign flyer, which carried my photograph and said, *'Wod 1, Haitek — Man bilong Pangu em Ian Willis'* ("Ward 1, Haitek — the Pangu candidate is Ian Willis'). Eric Duncason wrote to me irritably to say he regretted that Hitech was a ward of the council because the acrimony of the campaigning was proving so divisive.

The main issue of contention throughout the campaign was the matter of the PNG administration's proposed poll or head tax, *'Takis het'* in *Tokpisin*. In calling for the election of city councils in Lae and Port Moresby, the administration had promised to transfer certain taxation functions to the new councils. Among these was a proposed poll tax of $2 per adult. Though the government didn't say so, in proposing the tax it was making a crude attempt with a blunt and ineffective instrument to regulate urban migration. The idea was that people who couldn't produce the poll tax receipt on demand could be sent back to their home villages and districts.

The PCA party came out strongly in favour of the proposed tax. Knowing the tax would prove highly unpopular among Papua New Guineans, Tony Voutas, an astute political strategist, decided that Pangu should campaign on a platform of 'No head tax; indirect tax instead'. This policy reduced to the *Tokpisin* slogan *'Takis hait [hidden tax, i.e. indirect tax] tasol nogat takis het!'* ('Indirect tax, but not head tax'). It was Tony who invented the term *'takis hait'*, which henceforth became part of the *Tokpisin* lexicon.

The election was held one Saturday in March 1971. That evening Margaret and I ran a barbecue to thank my campaign workers for their support. As my scrutineer, I'd appointed our neighbour, Mike Deakin, the head of the Maths Department, who knew about psephological mathematics. He watched the count of votes on my behalf at the main polling station in Lae. At about 8.30 p.m. he arrived at the barbecue to announce that I'd won convincingly and would henceforth be Councillor Willis, Cr. Willis for short.

I can't be sure how Murray Falkiner's celebratory party up the road went, but I guess his staff were commiserating with him and saying what a shame that Pangu had stolen the

show. After the election had been and gone, Murray and I resumed cordial relations. He continued taking an interest in the council. Whenever we met, he inquired how my duties as the Ward 1 councillor were panning out.

I'd like to be able to write that Pangu had romped home on its populist platform of indirect taxation without a poll tax. That, however, didn't happen. The election resulted in a 'hung' council — nine PCA and nine Pangu councillors. Of the PCA bloc, six were white, two were Chinese and one was Papua New Guinean. Of the nine Pangu delegates, all but one of them — me — were Papua New Guineans. Voting hadn't been compulsory; and so, predictably, in the wards where European and Chinese voters predominated, the voters turned out in force and elected PCA councillors. In the peri-urban wards, where few expatriates lived, the electors returned Pangu candidates. Ward 1, Haitek, was atypical because it had a large population of liberal-minded expatriates who weren't afraid of PNG self-government; in addition, it had a large Papua New Guinean population who favoured Pangu. The anomaly in Haitek was the student candidate from Finschhafen, who didn't score well but nevertheless probably succeeded in capturing the vote of part of the large Finschhafen community on campus.

The Lae City Council

We nine new Pangu councillors were in for a great surprise at the inaugural meeting of the Lae City Council a couple of weeks later. We all attended with a cheer squad of our supporters in the public gallery. In the chair until a council president could be appointed was the District Commissioner, Ron Galloway.

The DC welcomed us to the meeting, congratulated us on our election and then indicated that he'd chair proceedings until we'd elected our inaugural president. So far so good, but then he made an astounding announcement. He proclaimed that one of the Pangu councillors, Brian Bogagu, was a public servant and therefore ineligible to be a council member. We Pangu delegates were both shocked and outraged. "Racial discrimination!" screamed Brian Bogagu. The DC instructed him to leave the chamber or be removed from it.

Realising that the PCA group now had the numbers and would elect one of their own as president, I leapt to my feet to cry foul; however, Galloway declared me out of order. He said his powers as DC included the decision he'd just announced. He then called for nominations for council president. We Pangu councillors nominated one of our own, Boyamo Sali (1944–2022), a bright young educated chap from Finschhafen. The PCA nominated Pama Anio, a Binandere [tribal group] businessman from south of Morobe, the sole Papua New Guinean PCA councillor. The DC then called for a show of hands for each candidate. Pama got nine votes, Boyamo eight. The DC then declared Pama elected, vacated the chair, and invited Pama to take his place. Pama took the chair, announced that the business of the council's inaugural meeting had been satisfactorily concluded, then declared the meeting closed.

Meeting over, the elated PCA councillors surged forward to congratulate Pama and each other. We Pangu councillors sat there glumly. We realised we'd not only been out-manoeuvred but guessed we'd been beautifully stitched up through the DC colluding with the movers-and-shakers of the PCA, perhaps on the orders of his superiors in the Department of District Administration. (The latter was the government agency responsible for superintending the local government system and for overseeing the work of the District Commissioners.)

In the weeks that followed, Tony Voutas devised a strategy for us Panguites to follow at the next council meeting in a month's time. In the meantime, he began a press campaign with a journalist friend, Paul Cowdy, the Lae representative of the *Post Courier*, the Port Moresby-based national daily newspaper. Paul wrote a front-page lead story with a banner

headline something like this: ***'"Galloway, get out of Lae!" Cr. Willis tells Morobe DC'***. It was a story concocted by Tony and Paul, but I agreed to be quoted in it because it said what I thought. The article argued that the DC, having no power in law to exclude a democratically elected delegate from a council meeting, had exceeded his authority. It proclaimed that the days of *kiap*-driven colonial autocracy had ended. It hinted that the DC and the PCA had colluded before the meeting to ensure that the Pangu councillors would be in a minority at the first council meeting. And, quoting me, it concluded by saying that Galloway and *kiaps* of his colonialist mindset should quit PNG forthwith and let Papua New Guineans govern their own country.

The article sent shockwaves through the Lae community and set alarm bells ringing at the Port Moresby headquarters of the Department of District Administration. Various Hitech colleagues let me know they were displeased with my newfound notoriety. They told me they'd voted for me in the expectation that I'd diligently represent Hitech interests in the council. They wouldn't have supported me if they'd thought I'd become a rabble-rousing demagogue.

Thanks to the stratagem that Tony devised, the Panguites turned the table on the PCA councillors at the very next council meeting. Brian Bogagu had been declared eligible to be a councillor, so we had a full complement of Pangu delegates. For some reason one of the PCA members was absent so we had a 9–8 advantage, and therefore the numbers to put Tony's plan into effect. What Tony planned, and what then happened, were as follows:

1) As soon as the president, Pama Anio, had opened the meeting, I would rise and move this motion: *'That Cr. Pama Anio be immediately removed from the position of Council President because the meeting that elected him had been improperly constituted through the interference of someone who was not a council member'*.
2) Speaking in *Tokpisin*, I duly stood and put the motion which Tony had written out for me. Boyamo Sali, the Pangu candidate for President, seconded my motion.
3) From that point we Panguites had to *ad lib* because, recognising that Pangu had the numbers to pass my motion, the PCA councillors rose *en masse* then walked out of the meeting. They stood around in the corridor outside looking in through the long open windows to watch subsequent proceedings.
4) As the leading Papua New Guinean Panguite, Boyamo took the chair. I repeated my motion and Boyamo seconded it again. He then put my motion, which passed unanimously.
5) I then moved that Boyamo be appointed President in place of the deposed Cr. Anio. Another of our members seconded me. Boyamo put the motion, which also passed unanimously. We clapped vigorously to show our approval.
6) Meanwhile, the PNG Administrator, Les Johnson, had arrived and taken a seat at the front of the chamber. He had entered as Pama Anio was opening the meeting. He had accordingly witnessed everything that had just happened.
7) Boyamo invited Les Johnson to address the meeting.
8) Les began by congratulating us on our election. He said that our responsibilities were heavy because the citizens of Lae expected much of us.
9) Turning to face the PCA councillors outside in the corridor, he castigated them for their walkout. He said their action had been grossly irresponsible. The electorate expected them to sit through council meetings instead of throwing a childish tantrum and storming out whenever their opponents outvoted them.

10) Boyamo thanked the Administrator for his attendance, his encouragement, and his wise advice. He then asked if anyone had business matters to raise. No one did, so he declared the meeting closed.

The *Post Courier* reported all this in graphic detail. ***'"Sack Lae City Council president!" Cr. Willis demands. Cr. Anio ousted'*** the banner headline ran. In the expatriate public's mind I was now Lae's *enfant terrible* — the youthful firebrand from Hitech, the dangerous revolutionary inebriated through drinking too deeply at the fountain of politics.

Within the council itself, even in the brief time he'd managed the meeting, Boyamo had demonstrated that he was a superb meeting chairman. The PCA members realised that if the council was to have a Papua New Guinean president, which, realistically, it must, then Boyamo was by far the best option regardless of his Pangu affiliations.

Under Boyamo's presidency, subsequent council meetings ran smoothly. Boyamo chaired meetings fairly and impartially. He soon won the respect of the PCA councillors. We Panguites and CPAites realised we could work cooperatively together. Within a few months we regarded each other as friends and comrades working for a common cause. The exception here was one of the Chinese councillors, a trade store owner who refused to speak to me or even acknowledge my existence.

Only one issue continued dividing us — the poll tax. The CPAites were all in favour and kept pushing for it. We Panguites had been elected because we'd opposed it and knew we'd lose credibility if it were introduced. We continued resisting it.

Here we had some encouragement from the *kiap* who'd been assigned to the council as its executive officer or town clerk. I forget his name, but he was a friendly chap who proved helpful in ensuring that the council worked productively in taking control of its appointed municipal functions. At his request, I had several private meetings with him. He assured me that he thought I'd acted correctly in having Boyamo Sali installed as council president after Ron Galloway's clumsy interference. He also said that Pangu was right to oppose the poll tax, because introducing and collecting it would be fraught with difficulty, and it wouldn't prevent urban immigration.

At stake for Pangu in the poll tax issue was the party's reputation. With elections for the national parliament due to be held in early 1972, we had to maintain our stance on the poll tax. If we allowed the tax to be introduced, we could expect the electorate to turn against us. Tony Voutas told me that if I did nothing else on council, I must hold the Pangu councillors together to ensure that the council didn't agree to accept the poll tax. Working behind the scenes with our councillors and supporters in the community, I achieved that. At the national elections Pangu won all the Morobe District seats except one. This was Menyamya in the remote mountainous western region of the district. When the newly elected parliamentarians got together in Lae, the Pangu chaps soon persuaded the Memyamya bloke that in the interests of Morobean solidarity he, too, should represent Pangu. He needed little persuasion. When the parliament met for the first time, the eleven Morobeans sat together as a solid Pangu bloc.

Boyamo Sali was one of the eleven new Morobe parliamentarians. Appropriately, he became the Minister for Local Government in the Pangu-led ministry of Michael Somare that took PNG to independence 3½ years later. He retained his seat for the next 15 years. He then chaired the PNG Harbours Board, was deputy chair of the PNG Banking Corporation and was subsequently knighted. Sir Boyamo died in the ANGAU Hospital in Lae in August 2022 at age 77, leaving behind his widow, six children and seven grandchildren.

The formation of the Somare government meant that I'd fulfilled my historic function in Lae politics; and so I resigned from the council. I had more important things to do with my time than continue playing council politics. Among others, I'd begun writing my MA thesis, and I wished to focus on that, complete it and get it submitted.

In the subsequent byelection, I was replaced by Conley Aima, a nice chap from Labu village on the western side of the Markham mouth who worked in the Unitech Library. At the next council elections in early 1975 Kabi Mandi took the Haitek seat for Pangu.

Being off the council didn't mean the end of my Pangu involvement. My Pangu friends continued seeking me out for advice; and, at the urging of Tony Voutas, who by now had moved to Port Moresby, I helped produce a regular Pangu newsletter for the Lae area. Many Papua New Guineans began referring to me and Margaret approvingly as *'Masta na Misis bilong Pangu'* — 'the European couple in Pangu Pati'.

The downside of that was that Lae's expatriate community generally regarded me as a dangerous, subversive ratbag. I could live with that, but it did create tensions in our marriage. When certain Chinese trade stores refused Margaret custom because of who her husband was, she realised that life could be difficult for a political activist's wife.

One consequence of my political involvements was the veiled threat I received via my brother David. David contacted me to say that he'd been told 'from on high' that I risked deportation. The message he'd received was, "Tell your brother to cool it, otherwise we'll revoke his PNG entry permit!" David tells me he received this warning from a chap called Tim who'd once been his clerk. Tim, who had very high-level links with the Department of Territories in Canberra, had been used as the messenger.

Yet another consequence was that an ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) operative in Lae began seeking me out. Tony Voutas warned me about him because he was also keeping tabs on Tony. He was a middle-aged Canadian chap married to a Papua New Guinean woman and was the uncle of one of my students. Under the guise of friendship, he'd ring me and sometimes visit me at home, always curious about what I was thinking and doing. I guessed he was snooping so was always circumspect in what I told him. I found out later from two independent sources that he had indeed been spying on me.

Other matters

I'll end this chapter now because I've written enough. There are many matters I haven't mentioned or discussed above. If I wanted this chapter to run for another 20 pages, I'd deal more fully with these topics:

- First, I'd write much about our house-boy Lunga, from Angabu village in the mountains west of Zenag on the Bulolo Road. He served us loyally and well for the five years we lived on the Unitech campus. For the last two of these he was assisted by his nephew Gelam, a lad in his early teens. Lunga wished to learn to drive, so I tried to teach him in our Ford 'Capri'. He never got the hang of changing gears with the clutch, however, so that was an abortive exercise. If I could be sure he were still alive and I could locate him, I'd make strenuous efforts to find him and settle on him a generous bequest.
- Each year we lived in Lae, I ran an introductory course in *Tokpisin* for new Hitech-Unitech staff and their family members. From memory, I developed an eight-lesson syllabus with each of the weekly classes running for 1½ hours. About ten people usually attended. One personal benefit was that I got to know most class members well, and most became my friends.
- My parents visited PNG in 1970 and 1972 to stay with me and then my brother David. Like us, they loved PNG, especially Dad, who revelled in being able to botanise around the campus and further afield. In 1970 he climbed Mount Giluwe in the Western Highlands with David and Rob Johns, a botanist at the Lae Botanic Gardens

who later lectured in Forestry at Unitech. My mother-in-law, 'Sandy' Vale also stayed with us in 1973, while Margaret was in hospital being treated for polyarthritis.

- I spent a year as secretary of the Lae Australian Football League during 1969. My main achievement as such was almost single-handedly organising and running that year's PNG national AFL carnival held in Lae.
- That year, too, NASA's 11th Apollo mission put Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon. About a week later, Riong, one of my friends among the Hitech cleaners, took me aside one morning to ask me about it. Pointing to the moon, which was still visible, he asked me if it was really true that a couple of US astronauts had been walking round up there. I replied, *"Em i tru! Ol Amerika i gat planti save!"* ("It's true! Those Americans have much know-how!") Riong just shook his head and walked away in amazement.
- In 1970 I organised a major three-day national conference of PNG tertiary students. The theme was 'Tertiary Students and Territory Politics'. We had delegates and speech-makers from all the major tertiary education institutions — Hitech, UPNG, Vudal Agricultural College, Goroka Teachers' College and perhaps several others. It was a grand talk-fest, allowing a gaggle of future national politicians to strut their stuff. A good time was certainly had by all, but I'm not sure what else it achieved.
- Among my friends were Philemon Balob, Cornelius Ngasengom and other *Apumtau* (traditional clan leaders) in Butibam village. They became my principal informants as I undertook my historical research in their village. On a couple of occasions they visited us for afternoon tea. Cornelius came back later to give Margaret a gift — a piece of sparkling rock, a micaceous schist, to thank her for her kindness. Probably in his 80s, he told her he'd never previously been inside a white person's house.
- Midway through 1972 I suffered a debilitating bout of dengue fever. It kept me in bed pain-racked for three weeks, making me feel the sickest I've ever been in my 85 years. For the first fortnight I thought I was dying, but I was so lethargic I didn't care whether or not my life was ending. I took a year to recover fully.
- In early December 1972 we spent a long weekend at Tamigudu village with Stuart and Elaine Hosking and their three children. At the time we didn't know it, but Margaret and Stuart are second-cousins-once-removed, both descended from the Grenness family of Wandiligong in north-eastern Victoria. As we sat on the beach watching Katie and Jan Hosking playing together, we joked about how remarkably alike they were — two little redhaired girls who looked like twins. On the Saturday evening, 5th December, we sat out on the beach sipping red wine and listening to the Radio Australia broadcast of the vote-counting for that day's Federal election. We cheered ourselves hoarse when we heard that Gough Whitlam's Labor Party had been returned to government after 23 years in opposition. Our Tamigudu hosts were amazed by our jubilation. *"Fasin bilong ol masta na misis taim ol i spak!"* ("The habit of Europeans when they're drunk!"), they might have guessed.
- During 1972 and 1973 I worked hard to establish the Morobe District Historical Society, with the support of Mary Woodward and Hartmut Holzknecht (the anthropologist son of Helene and Karl Holzknecht). The historical society proved enormously popular for the three or four years it flourished, but it lapsed after we'd all left Lae.
- I could write a separate chapter on the controversial regime of Eric Duncanson's successor, Dr John Sandover, who with his family came to Unitech from Nigeria at

the beginning of 1972. I did indeed do that in my 1977 PhD thesis, which had the title 'A thousand graduates: Conflict in university development in Papua New Guinea. 1961–1976' and later became my second book. Suffice to say here that it was John Sandover who vigorously pursued and achieved university status for Unitech in 1973.

- ✶ Nor have I the space here to write about the all the other many, many dozens of Hitech-Unitech teaching, administrative, technical and labouring staff I knew during my Lae years. Some were friends, some merely acquaintances and several were probably enemies. I tried not to acquire the last of these, but inevitably some of my fellow staff members were hostile to me because of my political involvements.

Looking back on our six years in Lae, I realise how enormously busy they were. I'm surprised now at the frenetic pace we seemed to maintain at work, at home, in our recreation, in our social life and in my postgraduate studies.

I also realise how those years were a life-shaping time for both Margaret and me. As well as developing life-long friendships, our careers changed course and led us in directions we've followed ever since. Our experiences in Lae remain precious in our memories for they greatly influenced us in becoming the people we now are.

Finally, I must say that living and working in PNG for nine years was an enormous privilege. That time gave us a huge affection for the place and its people. Sadly, many of our students are now dead. Like my best-ever Papua New Guinean friend, John Haugie, many died too young after succumbing to the Western lifestyle and the stresses and diseases that that entails.

Numerous Unitech and UPNG colleagues and friends have also gone off to attend that great graduation ceremony in the sky. One by one they keep 'hopping the twig', the most recent of them having been Jack Woodward, who died four weeks ago on 23 March 2023 at age 97.

I've felt Jack's death more keenly than most. Not only was he a close friend, one of my small select coterie of 'cobbers', he provided much encouragement and support for me and Margaret in the 52 years we knew him. I used to stay with him and Mary on my return visits to Lae after settling in Canberra. We stayed with them in Auckland during our one visit to New Zealand; and they stayed with us often in Canberra and at our holiday house at Tawonga in north-eastern Victoria. In between, we maintained a lively email correspondence. As well as all that, I admired him enormously for his integrity, his modesty about his huge achievements, and his continuing commitment to the Morobe peoples via the village-level hydroelectricity-generating projects he initiated and led until the last couple of years of his very long life. Being befriended by such a man was, in retrospect, one of the great benefits of our time in PNG.

10. CANTERBURY

We left Lae and Unitech during August 1973 to undertake a year's sabbatical leave in the UK. I returned to Lae for several days in September 1975 to witness the Independence Day celebrations; and I spent several weeks there in April 1976 while undertaking research for my PhD thesis. Margaret, Rosie, Tony and Katie have never been back to PNG, however.

We hoped to return together in September 2020, when I was supposed to spend several weeks in and around Lae researching my book *Operation Postern: The Battle for Lae, 1943*, but that didn't happen. Severe travel restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic in both Australia and PNG precluded such a trip. Unfortunate as that was, I didn't really need to revisit Lae to write such a book. Lae is so indelibly written into my memory that I can write about it meaningfully without going back there. Further, I often 'visit' Lae online, reading about developments there, looking at Google's satellite maps, watching YouTube videos and reading news media reports.

Sabbatical leave options

During my time at Hitech-Unitech, one prized benefit for academic staff was a year's paid sabbatical leave after five years' employment. By the time I'd completed my fifth year as a lecturer and then (from 1970) senior lecturer, I'd satisfactorily completed my MA degree at UPNG. We'd always wanted to visit ancestral Britain, so that's where we wished to spend our sabbatical year. Such leave was conditional on a Unitech-approved study program. As we lecturing staff mostly took the opportunity of upgrading and broadening our academic qualifications, approval was readily granted.

I applied to four UK universities for courses that appealed to me and was accepted by each. My top priority was the Dip. Sociology course at the University of Manchester; second was a similar course at the University of Kent at Canterbury; third was the MA coursework program in Chinese history at the University of Glasgow; and fourth was the MEd coursework program in educational history at the University of Nottingham.

The reason for wanting to study sociology was that my work on Lae history had shown me that paradigmatic models and language existed to describe the sociological phenomena I was encountering. I needed to understand the theories explaining that social reality; and sociology is the discipline that attempts to do so. The diploma courses at both Manchester and Kent were 'bridging' programs, designed to introduce sociological neophytes to the discipline and then bring them up to the level of students completing a sociology major in an undergraduate degree.

Manchester was my first choice because the head of the Sociology Department was Peter Worsley (1924–2013), whose 1954 PhD at ANU had been on Aboriginal kinship on Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria. He had wanted to undertake postdoctoral studies in PNG but was denied an entry permit because he was a member of the Communist Party. Instead, he studied Melanesian cargo cults using library resources. His subsequent 1957 book, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A study of cargo cults in Melanesia*, became an anthropological classic. Manchester's other great attraction was that my mate Graham McLean was teaching electrical engineering there. He and Sue had settled at Lymm in Cheshire, 20 kilometres south-west of Manchester after leaving Lae at the end of 1970. (They still live there.)

Arriving in the UK

Because our Ramu Drive house on the Unitech campus would probably be occupied by another family during our time away from Lae, we had to vacate it. We packed up our house and placed most of our personal possessions in the on-campus storage made available to us. Our clothing and various minimal necessities went into four suitcases. Getting the five of us from Lae to London was a major undertaking, but I recall little of the arrangements we had to make. One thing I do remember attending to was having both Margaret and me registered as teachers in England. This was in case we decided to stay on and needed to fall back on classroom teaching to pay our way. Becoming registered was a straightforward procedure: we wrote to the English Department of Education, filled out the requisite forms and supplied copies of teaching qualifications. To our relief, our applications were swiftly approved.

After saying our farewells to various friends and neighbours, we flew out of Lae for Port Moresby on Thursday 23 August 1973. We overnighted there in a hotel near Jackson's Airport before catching our Qantas flight to the UK the next morning. Travelling with us were our near neighbours and friends, Steve and Diane Seumahu and their two little children, Sonya and Ben, who were also going to the UK for several days before going on to the USA.

The Qantas flight took us Port Moresby-Darwin-Singapore-Bahrein-London, with a half-day stopover in Singapore. Our aircraft was a 'Jumbo Jet', a Boeing 747, and that was the first time we'd flown in one. We couldn't believe how enormous they were. For our time in Singapore, Qantas booked us into a hotel. Before trying to sleep there for several hours, we went on to a city sight-seeing bus tour arranged by the hotel. The main purpose of the tour seemed to be to take us to numerous shops, where we were expected to spend as much money as possible. My one purchase was my first electronic pocket calculator, an item still relatively uncommon. (It was only invented in 1971.)

Apart from the stopover in Singapore, I remember little about our journey to the UK. When we reached Darwin, which we'd never seen before, I thought it seemed like a flat, desolate version of Port Moresby — hot, oppressive climate, dry and dusty, and similar straggly savannah vegetation. In Bahrein we had to vacate the plane for an hour while it was cleaned. My main memory of being there is that my glasses were stolen. We'd been told to leave our hand luggage on the plane. Foolishly, I left my new and recently prescribed spectacles in their case in my seat pocket. It was only when we were airborne again that I discovered they were missing. I suppose the cleaner who tidied our seats guessed the case was a wallet, and that he needed it more than I did. I trust that he found some use for my glasses. He'd have needed strangely configured eyeballs if he'd tried wearing them himself.

Approaching Heathrow airport, we realised with great excitement that at long last we were coming back to the land of the ancestors. We probably glimpsed Windsor Castle briefly during our descent, but apart from seeing various rows of greyish apartment buildings as we approached the runway, I don't remember much of our first experience of Britain. What I do remember is the great milling crowd from planes just arrived who surged towards the immigration control gates. As we shuffled towards them, we tried to remain close to the Seumahus and keep our children together.

It was at this point we realised that the relationship between Australia and the UK had changed. This became evident at the immigration control gates, which were divided into two main sections, one headed 'UK and European Community passport holders', the other for 'Commonwealth Citizens and Aliens'. The UK had entered the European Community eight months earlier. Unsentimentally, it had jettisoned the Commonwealth. As far as entry to Britain was concerned, Commonwealth citizens were now no better than 'Aliens'. Germans, Britain's erstwhile mortal enemies, could now walk straight through the gate, with the

immigration clerk only cursorily glancing at their passports. Australians, loyal citizens of the former Empire, had to argue their way into the UK.

When our turn eventually came after moving forward in a long, slow-moving queue, the clerk at our gate carefully read through our detailed incoming passenger cards. Accusingly, he asked what proof I had that we'd had come to the UK so I could undertake a university course. How was he supposed to know we weren't trying to slip into Britain as illegal immigrants? I explained that the British High Commission in Canberra had granted us visas because I'd already provided certified copies of the offers of places I'd received from several British universities. "But you haven't given me that proof!" he persisted. Fortunately, I had the documentation in my hand luggage, so I retrieved it. After reading it, he stamped our passports and waved us through. The stamped inscription read, *'Entry granted for two years for study purposes. Passport holder may not work in the UK in that time in either paid or unpaid employment.'* Welcome to the ancestral homeland!

Fortunately, once we'd wrangled our way through immigration control, we never again had to negotiate such bureaucratic impediments. No one ever checked up on us. We were free to travel and live wherever we wanted. We both eventually undertook full-time paid work as teachers without anyone querying our right to do so; and we were each offered permanent teaching positions and work permits which would have allowed us to remain in the UK indefinitely if we'd chosen to stay.

Steve and Diane didn't have the hassles we experienced. That was because they were going on to the US after several days in London so that Steve could take up a post-doctoral research fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. When we re-joined them, we caught cabs together to the B&B (bed-and-breakfast accommodation) in a terrace house in Sussex Gardens, Paddington, where we were all staying. Margaret and Diane and the children were exhausted by this stage, early afternoon, so they all wanted to sleep. Steve and I, however, were wide awake and eager to explore. We walked round the corner from Sussex Gardens into Edgware Road, which we followed for about 800 metres in a south-westerly direction, past various shops, restaurants and pubs, until we came to Marble Arch, beyond which lay the vast Hyde Park. Crossing to the park, within 100 metres we found the famous Speakers' Corner, where various soapbox orators were making impassioned speeches. After standing around listening to them for about half an hour, we walked back to the B&B. On the way, I probably insisted on stopping at one of the pubs to try my first half-pint of English beer. Steve, a strict teetotaller, might have agreed to sip a lemonade while I downed my ale.

Over the ensuing weekend we caught up with a couple of Unitech families who'd come to the UK on sabbatical leave some months earlier. From memory, we met them in Hyde Park, where the children greatly enjoyed scampering around together. They'd all been pupils together at the Taraka school in Lae. The first couple were John and Jill Bolliger and their four children. John had lectured in Chemistry in Lae but had come to London to undertake a course in IT. He wasn't enjoying the course, however, and had decided to quit. Several weeks later they returned to Sydney, where John spent the rest of his career teaching in the TAFE (technical and further education) sector. The second couple were Bill and Glenn Boyce and their two daughters. Bill had been a senior lecturer in Civil Engineering at Unitech and was completing a study program at the University of Surrey in Guildford. He and Glenn returned to Brisbane soon afterwards. Sadly, Glenn died from cancer a couple of years later.

Up to Manchester

On the Monday after we'd reached London, I took a bus north to Manchester to visit the university and meet Peter Worsley. Margaret and the kids remained in our B&B in

Paddington, busily spending their time sight-seeing. During this excursion, I stayed with Mac and Sue in Lymm. I went to see Worsley, a genial chap who was interested in my PNG background. He seemed keen for me to be a student in his department but, he explained, unfortunately the Dip. Sociol. program wouldn't be run that year. I was the only prospective entrant, and the university wouldn't allow a course to be run for just one student. Disappointed, I decided to pursue my second preference option, the Dip. Sociol. at the University of Kent, almost as far away from Manchester as I could be while still in England.

I spent four days around Manchester. One afternoon I caught a bus to Rochdale to meet Cyril Salkin, the younger brother of Ivor, my mate from teachers' college days. Although the two towns are only 13 miles apart, the journey seemed interminably long. Cyril, a GP, was pleased to see me. We chatted for an hour or so over the Salkin boys' youth in Oldham, midway between Manchester and Rochdale. Another afternoon, Mac drove me to Heswall, on the Wirrall peninsular south of Birkenhead, to meet my Uncle Rupert Willis, who was living there in retirement with his daughter and son-in-law, Betty and Rex Rewell. On yet another trip, Mac drove me up into the Peak District National Park south-east of Manchester. During that excursion I was surprised to see a little one-teacher school in the hills beyond Chapel-en-le-Frith. Afternoon recess was in progress, and the children were happily playing in the schoolyard as their female teacher looked on. I hadn't expected to see such a school in closely settled Britain. We also rambled around the ruins of Peverill Castle near Castleton, which was my first visit to a castle of any kind. The highlight of the trip, however, was our visit to the Blue John Cavern, which my parents had visited the previous year. 'Blue John' is a semi-precious mauve- and blue-coloured fluorite that was mined in the Peak District, including in the Blue John Cavern.

After Mac had dropped me at the Manchester bus station on my final afternoon, I returned to London. A couple of days later, Saturday 1st September, Margaret, the children and I took the train from Victoria station to begin a new and exciting life in Canterbury.

Down to Canterbury

The journey to Canterbury didn't begin auspiciously. After farewelling Bridget, the kindly Irishwoman who ran our B&B in Paddington, we took a commodious London 'black cab' to the station. Because we had four hefty suitcases as well as our hand luggage, I found a large 4-wheel trolley to cart our gear to the departure platform. I was just about to begin unloading the cases beside our carriage when an urgent announcement came over the station loudspeakers. *'Clear the station immediately! Bomb alert! Please exit the station and wait outside in the street pending further announcements!'* Margaret ushered the children along the platform and up the ramp to the station entrance. I followed, lugging the heavy trolley. We spent the next two hours standing in the street about 50 metres from the station entrance, along with thousands of other would-be passengers.

As we stood there waiting, we learned that the bomb scare was real. At about that time, the Provisional Irish Republican Army had detonated two bombs in central London, one at King's Cross station and the other at Euston, injuring 21 people. A third bomb was said to have been placed within Victoria station, but perhaps that was a hoax because the police bomb squad checked the station thoroughly without finding any bombs. (A week later the 'Provos' did strike Victoria and also Paddington, killing one person and injuring another 38.)

Eventually another announcement told us we could re-enter the station and go to our departure platforms. So back we went to begin the journey we would already have finished if the bomb scare hadn't intervened. Within half an hour we were safely aboard our train and on our way to Canterbury West station, 88 kilometres to the south-east.

We knew that Kent was called the 'garden of England'. We soon realised why. As we neared Canterbury, we saw more and more orchards and hop gardens spreading out on either side of us in classic English chequer-board pattern, each surrounded by its own hedgerow. And then we glimpsed Canterbury Cathedral for the first time. What a sight! It seemed to float mid-air across the fields to our front right. Within seconds it vanished as trees beside the railway line hid it from view. Minutes later we were approaching Canterbury.

After clambering from our carriage at the West station, we found a taxi to take us and all our luggage to our overnight accommodation. This was a small two-storey Tudor-era private hotel we'd booked into while in London. It was located in a side street, perhaps St Margaret's Street, off High Street, the main thoroughfare through central Canterbury. (I've just tried locating it with the aid of the 'street view' facility in Google Maps, but cannot find it so perhaps it has meanwhile closed.) As the taxi swung onto the main road into the city, we had another magical view. There ahead of us was the Westgate Tower, a pair of 18-metre battlemented cylindrical towers joined by a gatehouse over a Gothic-arched gateway. Built in 1380, it's Britain's largest surviving mediaeval town gate.

Our hotel turned out to be another treasure. From memory, its outer walls were of a building material we'd never seen before but very common in south-eastern England — grey-black split flints packed closely together and cemented into place. The floors in the upstairs bedrooms were uneven because of subsidence over the centuries, but, as we discovered, that, too, is common in Britain. The children stayed in one room; Margaret and I slept in another nearby. For the one and only time in our lives we slept in a genuine four-poster bed.

We stayed in the hotel for about three nights, using it as a base for nearby sightseeing. We visited places such as the 1190 Canterbury Pilgrims Hospital of St Thomas the Martyr, the Beaney Library and Museum, and of course the Cathedral — one of the most sublimely beautiful buildings of any kind anywhere in the world.

On the Monday morning, 3rd September, I began the task of finding us somewhere to live. I struck it lucky at the first attempt. I found a real estate agent who was running a small business near our hotel. I explained to him what our needs were — essentially a sturdy, well-appointed furnished house or unit within walking distance of the university, close to shops and a primary school, preferably with a garden around it, and ease of access to public transport. "I have just the right place for you," he said. "It's modern, a university lecturer's family home. He's taken a job in Bahrein for two years and wants a respectable family to occupy the house while he and his family are overseas." The rent seemed reasonable and well within our budget, so I said we'd accept it. He took a £50 deposit, gave me the keys then suggested that I go check it out.

I collected Margaret and the children from the hotel to visit the house, 'Wentways', Hackington Place, Canterbury CT2-7JR. It was a stand-alone house in a quiet neighbourhood of mainly modern units only a kilometre from the town centre on the far side of the West railway station. At the front, it faced a large three-hectare open space, Beverley Meadow, where the local kids and the Dads played cricket of a summer evening. It was fully and comfortably furnished; it had cable colour TV (which was new to us), a modern hot-water radiator heating system and double glazing throughout; it had separate kitchen, laundry, dining room, loungeroom and a toilet on the ground floor; upstairs were four bedrooms and a bathroom-toilet; and it had a separate garage. A government primary school, St Stephen's, was only 700 metres away on the far side of Beverley Meadow.

'Wentways' was ideal in every respect, so back into town we traipsed to tell the agent we'd rent it for the year or more we'd be living in Canterbury. The only hitch was that we couldn't occupy the house for another fortnight. But not to worry; he'd arrange temporary accommodation for us in Whitstable, on the sea 13 kilometres north of Canterbury, with frequent buses connecting the two towns. Our housing there was spartan student-style

accommodation, in a Victorian-era three-story terrace house. It had TV, heating and hot water, but all were of the pay-as-you-go, coin-in-the-metre type. The idea was to load the metres with 50-pence coins with a pile of extra coins nearby in case the appliance cut out. The metres were ravenously hungry, so taking a shower and watching a TV program were expensive, fraught processes. As for the heating, we found it more convenient and much cheaper simply to wear more clothes.

Finding the university and the Sociology department

After moving to Whitstable, my first priory was to contact the Sociology department at the University of Kent. The first morning after moving in, I caught the bus to Canterbury to visit the university and locate the Sociology department. Finding the university was easy, locating the department less so. The western boundary of the campus ran along the Whitstable Road, with a bus stop on the corner of Giles Lane, the road into the university.

The university had opened eight years earlier, in 1965. It occupied a 300-acre (1.2 square kilometre) site, formerly 'Beverley' farm, a mile north of Canterbury on a ridge overlooking the town. It had modelled itself on the 'Oxbridge' college system. This meant that the teaching departments, staff and classrooms were not centrally located in their own buildings. Instead they were decentralised, spread across a series of four residential colleges. These were Eliot, Darwin, Keynes and Rutherford, named for T.S. Eliot (the poet), Charles Darwin (the naturalist), J.M. Keynes (the economist) and Ernest Rutherford (the physicist). I personally found the college system confusing and inconvenient. I spent much time walking from one end of the campus to another going from college to college for classes and meetings with my teachers.

I already knew I was a member of Eliot College, so that became my first port-of-call. Even though I wouldn't be living there, Eliot would be my base for my time at the university. As things turned out, most days I was at the university I visited the college to collect my mail and messages. Several of my teachers had their rooms there; and some of my lectures and tutorials were conducted there. It so happened that Professor Paul Stirling (1920–1998), the head of the combined Sociology and Anthropology department, was also in Eliot, so that was convenient. I had more to do with Paul than any of his other staff members, and he became my initial 'go-to' person if I had problems to sort out.

After meeting Paul during my first visit to Eliot, I felt happier. He was a genial, obliging chap, a distinguished cultural anthropologist whose main work had been among rural village communities in Turkey. After he inquired about my background, he assured me that the Dip. Sociol. course would proceed, with classes starting in another three weeks. He explained that the diploma course would have five other students as well as me. He'd conduct our tutorials, but we'd also attend classes with the MA (Sociology) students, about a dozen of them. Joining the classes, too, would be a half-dozen postgraduate students undertaking preliminary coursework in hope of being accepted as PhD students.

Paul then referred me to Dr Derek Allcorn (1927–1986), a senior lecturer in Sociology, in Rutherford, the next college east of Eliot. As with Paul, Derek was interested in my background in PNG history and my reasons for wanting to study Sociology. He asked what I knew about social change. I said I knew none of its anthropological or sociological theory, but I'd been witnessing rapid social change in PNG over the past nine years. He then inquired about my domestic arrangements. I told him I was married with three young children, had my family with me, was living temporarily in Whitstable while waiting to move into a nearby house in Canterbury. He was pleased with these developments because, he assured me, securing satisfactory accommodation was most important; and once I was settled I'd be able

to focus on my studies. By inference, I guessed that some postgraduate students came unstuck because they experienced difficulties with their housing.

First excursions

I still had three weeks before my classes began, time enough for us to begin familiarising ourselves with our new surrounds. We spent several days visiting towns and villages in the Canterbury area, mainly those we could easily reach by bus. We didn't like our temporary Whitstable apartment, however, and so we spent as little time there as possible. Instead, we undertook several excursions away from Canterbury. The first was a day trip to Great Shelford near Cambridge to visit the house my Willis forebears had lived in before emigrating to Australia in 1853. Second, we travelled north to Scotland to visit Fenwick and 'Lochgoin' farm, the place of my Howie ancestors.

We hired a car for the trip to Great Shelford. Getting there proved an adventure. The quickest and most direct way was up the M2 motorway towards London, then a right-turn onto the A282 and under the Thames via the Dartford tunnel. That would take us onto the main London–Cambridge road. I was driving and Margaret navigating, using a road map. My instructions were to follow the main roads and the Cambridge signs but to keep us as far away from central London as possible.

We got through the tunnel easily enough, but the further we went the denser the traffic seemed to become. Eventually we were halted by a traffic jam. Hemmed in by cars on both sides, I glanced up to see what street we were on. The street sign said 'Threadneedle Street' and pointing to a large, impressive nearby building was a sign saying 'Bank of England'. "You've navigated us right into the epicentre of London!" I exploded. Margaret later said that if she'd been able to get out of the car, she'd have done so and wouldn't have stopped until she was back in Melbourne at her parents' house. Somehow, we managed to escape the maze of congested streets thereabouts, turn east and follow a series of roads that eventually took us onto the Cambridge road. Within a couple of hours of exiting central London we were in Great Shelford, which is only 7 kilometres south of Cambridge.

We soon found 9 High Green, the two-storeyed Georgian house my great-great-grandfather, James Brand Willis, had sold to his Hagger brother-in-law on departing for Australia. When Dad lived in England in 1958–1959, he visited the house and met his third-cousin, Steven Hagger, the great-grandson of the chap who'd bought it. Steven had meanwhile died but his widow and daughter were still living in the house. They welcomed us in, showed us round and served us morning tea. After that, we looked round the village then visited nearby Stapleford, where my great-great-grandmother had lived before her marriage. We then drove back to Whitstable without mishap. I felt greatly satisfied at having visited one of the two ancestral villages I knew anything about.

The next excursion, several days later, was to Scotland to find Fenwick, my Howie great-grandfather's village, and nearby 'Lochgoin' farm, the Howies' ancestral home. We made the trip in two stages. First, we caught trains to Warrington, the nearest station to Lymm, where we were overnighting with the McLeans. Mac collected us from the station. Because he and Sue were going to Europe for their summer holiday, he generously loaned us his Mini-Minor station wagon for our expedition to Scotland.

We set off the next morning for Kilmarnock, 7 kilometres south of Fenwick, where we'd booked ourselves into the Wheatsheaf Inn. By the time we got there, night had already fallen. We had some difficulty finding the hotel, which was in an obscure alley off a side street in a maze of other twisting, intersecting streets, many of which were one-way. I took a wrong turn and drove the wrong way down one of these. I'd only gone about 50 metres when a police car with flashing lights appeared beside me. "This is a one-way section and you're

going in the wrong direction!" the policeman shouted. I apologised, explaining that I was from Australia, had never been in Kilmarnock before, and had become confused in trying to find the 'Wheatsheaf'. He directed me to go back the way I'd come, turn right onto the main road then follow that for several blocks. I'd only gone a couple of hundred metres when I noticed flashing police lights in the rear-vision mirror. I pulled over and let the police car draw level. "I misdirected you," the policeman apologised; "the 'Wheatsheaf' isn't down this road, so follow me and I'll take you to it." Thanking him profusely, grateful for not having been issued a traffic infringement notice, and glad for the courtesy and helpfulness of British police, we followed him. Ten minutes later we were inside the 'Wheatsheaf' in our rooms and about to go to the dining room for dinner.

The next morning we drove to Fenwick. We looked around the C17th church, which many generations of my Howie forebears had attended, and we found various Howie graves in the cemetery beside the church. The Minister, whom we met, told us that Thomas Howie, the last of his surname to farm at 'Lochgoin', was now living in a retirement home in the village. As my parents had met him the previous year, I decided to visit him to pay my respects. I spent an interesting half hour chatting with him. He was in his 80s and had met many Howies from around the world, all of them, like me, making the obligatory pilgrimage to Fenwick and 'Lochgoin'.

Driving on from Fenwick, we went to 'Lochgoin'. We found it down a side road about 5 kilometres north the village. It's one of the most forlorn farmhouses in Britain. It sits in the middle of a dismal almost treeless moor of bog moss without another building in sight. The weather didn't improve my perceptions: high summer, but a grey, drizzly wet day with a fog and a brisk, chilling breeze. We parked on the gravel space at the front then knocked on the door. A woman of about my own age answered the door. This was Mrs Jane Barr, wife of the current 'Lochgoin' tenant, James Barr, who was the grandson of Thomas Howie. We explained that we were Howie-connected visitors from Australia come to view the ancestral estate. She was used to receiving Howie travellers from around the world, so directed us to the Covenanter museum set up in the end room of the house. Before going there, we chatted for a few minutes. She asked how we liked Scotland. Looking around, I said that Scotland and its people were fine, but having seen 'Lochgoin' on such a foul day I could appreciate why my great-grandfather had wished to emigrate to sunny Australia. "What do you mean?" she asked indignantly; "It's a fine, fresh Scottish summer's day!"

Choosing not to argue the merits of the local weather, we thanked her for allowing our intrusion, then went to inspect the museum. The museum is maintained by a local institution called the Lochgoin and Fenwick Covenanters' Trust. The Trust also owns the 'Lochgoin' property; and so the Barrs were the Trust's tenants. Previously, the property had been a holding within the estates of the Lords Rowallan, who dwelt in Rowallan Castle about 3 kilometres south-west of Fenwick. The Rowallans had passed the property to the Trust in 1966. No matter who the owners are, the Howies and now the Barrs have always been tenants at 'Lochgoin'. That to me was astounding. They've been there for about 850 years now but have never owned their house or the property they've farmed. They've always been tenants in perpetuity.

The museum contained various relics from the troubled Covenanting era of the seventeenth century, when the Stuart kings had forcefully tried imposing Anglican forms of worship and governance upon the Presbyterians. The Covenanters were those who opposed them and upheld Presbyterianism. Both 'Lochgoin' and Fenwick were centres of Covenanter resistance. The period is still remembered locally as 'the killing times'. All the exhibits, although obscure, were interesting to me because I'd grown up knowing about the Covenanters and their importance in Howie family lore. I was also interested to find my Uncle Bill Howie's name in the visitors' book. He'd been there seven years earlier, in 1966

during a trip to see his daughter Anne Howie, who was undertaking research for a PhD in palaeontology at Cambridge.

After seeing the museum, we walked 160 metres along the pathway up the slight rise to the west of the farmhouse to see the Lochgoin Memorial. This is a granite obelisk erected in 1896 in memory of John Howie (1735–1793), who'd farmed 'Lochgoin'. He was the author of *The Scots Worthies* (1775), a series of biographical profiles of the heroes of the Scottish Reformation. Like any Howie interested in family lore, I have a copy, the later leather-bound edition of 1870. I'd like to be able to claim John Howie as a direct ancestor, but I can't. I am, however of the same patriline. That's because his younger brother, James Howie (1737–1832), was my '3-times-great-grandfather', which also means John the author was my '3-times-great-granduncle'. That's rather remote, but I'm pleased there's a connection because it directly ties my ancestry to the Howies of 'Lochgoin'.

Our 'Lochgoin' excursion done, we began the long drive back to Lymm. Being there and in Fenwick had been a gratifying experience because within a fortnight of arriving in Britain I'd visited the two ancestral places I'd always wanted to see. At this stage we knew nothing of Margaret's ancestral places, and we wouldn't learn much about them for another 15 years, until we'd done extensive genealogical research.

We arrived at the McLean house well after dark. Mac and Sue were still away. After overnighting there, we caught our succession of trains back to Canterbury and then our bus to our cheerless unit in Whitstable. Fortunately, a couple of days later we moved into 'Wentways', where we lived happily for the next 16 months until our return to Australia at the beginning of 1975.

Several weeks after shifting to 'Wentways', I had my next out-of-town expedition. This was a day trip by train to Liverpool one Saturday to collect my Ford 'Capri' car. I'd had it shipped to Britain because that was easier and cheaper than trying to sell it in Lae and then buy a new car in Britain. It had gone to Liverpool because when I'd sent it from Lae I thought we'd be living only 50 kilometres away in Manchester. I forget the details, but I guess the shipping company notified me that the car had arrived and was ready to collect. I duly retrieved it from the docks and drove it all the way back to Canterbury non-stop. By the time I arrived it was late at night and I was exhausted; however, I also felt greatly relieved and rather pleased with myself. I'd not only driven along 450 kilometres of Britain's busiest motorways without mishap but also across central London at night.

St Stephen's School

Rosie and Tony began school as soon as we moved into 'Wentways'. The new school year had opened about a week before our move. The day after we'd taken up residence, Margaret walked them along the path across Beverley Meadow to St Stephen's Junior School. This is a government primary school adjacent to St Stephen's Church, an Anglican parish church dating back some 900 years to the Anglo-Saxon era. The rector had founded the school in 1848 in a purpose-built two-storey building about 200 metres west of the church in Hackington, as the village surrounding the church was then named. In 1870 it became a government school; and during the late 1950s it moved into new premises about 100 metres north of the church. By then, Hackington had merged with Canterbury.

With Katie in tow, Margaret took the two older children to the front office. She met the headmaster and explained that as we'd just moved into the area and this was our nearest school she'd like to enrol them. No problems. Rosie was placed in Mr Ancell's Grade 6 and Tony in Miss Ritchie's Grade 3. Before taking them to their classrooms, the headmaster (whose name we've forgotten) led them on a quick tour. With great pride, he showed them

the school's newly installed above-ground swimming pool. He asked if they could swim. "All Australians are champion swimmers," Rosie replied disdainfully.

They settled in quickly and soon made friends. By this stage they were veterans of starting in new schools. Amazingly, they quickly reverted to type. Within several weeks, their freckles had faded and they acquired the pale, clear 'peaches-and-cream' complexions of British children. They no longer looked like typical little sub-bronzed, freckle-faced Aussies but resembled their English classmates. They also rapidly acquired the local Canterbury accent, which to our ears sounded like a singsong variation of Cockney with the 'g' dropped from 'ing'-ending words and prominent glottal-stops instead of 't' in the middle and at the end of words. Thus, they'd say, *"I'm goin' to ge' the bo''le of toma'o sauce ou' of the fridge, then I'll be pu''in' i' on my mea' pie."* They retained their quaint Canterbury accents during the first year after we'd moved to Canberra.

As Katie was 4½ and had been in preschool all that year in Lae, Margaret tried to find a nearby preschool for her. Such, however, didn't seem to exist in Canterbury. The nearest approximation was a Salvation Army child-minding centre in a laneway off High Street in the city centre. Margaret took her there only twice. It was so low-level and unchallenging that Katie was bored and wanted to go home within half an hour. Margaret and Katie subsequently spent their days shopping and sightseeing. They visited every historic and archaeological site in the city, from the town walls to the Roman ruins, and Saint Augustine's Abbey to 'Invicta', Robert Stephenson's locomotive, which had run on the Whitstable–Canterbury line 1830–1839. Margaret got to know the butcher especially well, because she bought the same cuts of meat she'd have bought in Lae — rump steak, a leg of lamb, tenderloin roast. In Canterbury most residents regarded these as too expensive. When Margaret walked in the door the butcher knew he'd make a good sale. He used to kid her, saying, "Can I come to dinner at your place tonight?"

Bored, and also lonely because we didn't know the neighbours, Margaret visited the local infant school to offer her services as a volunteer. This was St Stephen's Infant School, a Beginners-to-Grade 2 facility adjacent to but structurally separate from the junior school where Rosie and Tony were enrolled. She met the headmistress (not called 'principal'), Peggy Hayes, a Western Australian woman who'd married a Royal Navy officer during the war and had then settled in Canterbury. She told Peggy she'd be happy to hear reading, assist with art-craft work, help with physical education activities, pack up equipment and undertake any of the other tasks customarily done by teachers' aides. Perhaps it was Peggy's lingering fondness for the people of her homeland, or she might have recognised the excellent teacher in Margaret, but Peggy offered Margaret a job for six weeks. One of her teachers was going off on sick leave, she explained, and she hadn't yet found a replacement.

Margaret jumped at the offer. She began work several days later. She was assigned the Reception class, i.e. the beginners. Because Katie was now old enough and St Stephen's practised 'continual enrolment' (accepting children as soon as they reached school age), Katie was enrolled and placed in Margaret's class. And so Margaret got to teach all three of our children in turn.

At the end of the six weeks, the teacher on leave decided not to return to work. Peggy offered Margaret the job permanently. Of course Margaret accepted gladly. She held the position for the next year, until we returned to Australia.

In that time Margaret became a valued member of the St Stephen's staff. Her vigorous program of teaching reading and writing to the beginners from the outset was new to the school. Previously, Reception pupils had undertaken little more than organised play activities. Within a week Margaret had them writing their own sentences in their workbooks and spelling the words correctly. The parents loved it. Margaret became immensely popular among them. She also became firm friends with her colleagues, who could appreciate what an

innovative, diligent and productive teacher she was. We can't remember all their names, but apart from Peggy Hayes, Margaret's best friend on the staff was Barbara Beinder, who was married to a teacher and lived in Bridge, the first village going down the Dover road from Canterbury.

The greatest surprise for Margaret was the stiff formality of dealings between staff members. At school they all addressed each other as 'Mrs Hayes' and 'Mrs Beinder', never 'Peggy' and 'Barbara'. Margaret, who was used to the informality of staffrooms in Australia and PNG, called everyone by their first names. She realised how rigid the informal rules were, and how clear the class distinctions, when the cleaners, a husband-and-wife team, deferentially called her 'Mrs Willis'. When they came into her room the first time and said who they were, Margaret asked them to call her that rather than 'Mrs Willis'. "Oh, we can't call you 'Margaret', because you're a teacher and we're only the cleaners," they replied. "But I want you to call me Margaret," she responded, "because we'll be seeing a lot of each other, and we'll be friends." So that's what they called her, and they did become good friends.

Because the school was growing, there was pressure on classroom space. Margaret's Reception class used one end of the assembly hall as a classroom. This meant that she and her pupils were often on display when visitors arrived. The purposeful work of the Reception class under Margaret's guidance was a good advertisement for the school, but it also produced its lighter moments. One day a team of painters was repainting the hall. Margaret and the children were sitting in a circle at the classroom end playing one of their favourite clapping games. This was *'Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?'*, which requires the children to clap their hands as they chant the question in unison. After they'd finished, one of the painters came up to Margaret and said, "Hey Miss, you're doing that song the wrong way!" "Really? How should it be done?" she asked. "It goes like this," he answered; "Arsenal! Arsenal!" then clapped his hands three times as Arsenal fans do when they're cheering on their team.

The Sociology course

We're now 11 pages into this chapter, and I still haven't discussed my Sociology classes. Although they were the reason we were living in Canterbury, I've left them until now because they were only one part of my life there. They began about a week after we'd moved into 'Wentways'.

My Dip.Sociol. class comprised a diverse group of six. Apart from me, the Australian from PNG and the oldest, there were two Iranian women, a chap from Greece, another from Nepal and a Catholic priest from Ireland. They all lived on the campus in their colleges. They were nice, friendly people and we got on well together. One of the Iranians was congenitally blind but lived independently and could negotiate her way around the campus readily. The other Iranian was the wife of a fellow Iranian undertaking a postgraduate law course. The Greek chap seemed to speak little English and the Nepalese bloke spoke it better than he did. The only one whose name I remember was the priest, Fr. Patrick McShane, who'd come to the university after studying at a seminary in Basel, Switzerland. We became good friends; and I taught him how to play squash, using the conveniently located university courts.

I never really got to know the other four because they were all very quiet and left all the talking in class to Fr. Patrick and me. Much the same happened when we attended the MA students' seminars. Fr. Pat and I contributed to the discussions, but the others said nothing. We of course had the advantage of being native English speakers with previous postgraduate training. Within a fortnight, I realised I probably wouldn't learn much by remaining in the diploma class. On the other hand, if I could wangle my way into the MA class, where I was making a worthwhile contribution, I'd learn more.

What most persuaded me to switch courses was learning that assessment for the diploma course would be by written examination whereas the MA students were assessed on the essays and the 25,000-word dissertation they submitted. My bad experience with the MA Preliminary exams at UPNG in 1969 had given me an aversion to written examinations. Essays and dissertations were no problem for me, but I now had a phobia about formal three-hour closed-book written examinations.

Without mentioning my hatred of exams, I took my concerns to Professor Stirling. He agreed with me that I'd cope with the MA-level coursework and would gain more by transferring into the MA class. My assigned tutor, whose name I forget, agreed. I accordingly became a master's degree aspirant rather than a diploma student.

All my new classmates, the dozen MA students, had undergraduate degrees in Sociology. They were sociologists-in-the-making; I was the neophyte. Although I had no background in the discipline, I found that was no disadvantage. If I did the required reading for the seminars, I could follow the discussion. Meanwhile, the intensive reading I had to do to write my essays familiarised me with the discipline.

The MA course was loosely structured. Students studied two compulsory subjects or 'modules' and one elective, and they wrote an obligatory 25,000-word dissertation in a field of their choosing. They were also encouraged to attend the seminars in electives other than the one they'd chosen; and they were also free to attend undergraduate lectures and tutorials as well. Assessment in each of the three assessable subjects was by one 10,000-word essay per trimester, i.e. three essays per subject and a total of nine essays for the one-year course. With the dissertation, students accordingly wrote some 115,000 words of satisfactorily assessed material to complete the MA. This was about the same amount as a PhD student would produce in a thesis. Students selected their own essay topics after discussion with the lecturer in charge of each subject; similarly, the dissertation topic was agreed through negotiation with the appropriate lecturer.

The two compulsory subjects were 'Current Problems in Sociology', which boiled down to sociological theory; and 'Problems of Sociological Method', another name for sociological research methods. The optional electives included Sociology of the Family, Sociology of Knowledge, Educational Sociology, Political Sociology, Urban Sociology and the Sociology of Third World Development. I chose Urban Sociology as my elective and opted for the Sociology of Third World Development for my dissertation.

Except in the undergraduate courses, teaching — or what passed for teaching — didn't consist of the lecturer standing before the class and lecturing. Instead, it comprised a weekly seminar at which one of the students, and occasionally a lecturer, would present a paper. The seminars, I recall, ran for an hour and a half. The presentation occupied the first half hour; the rest of the time was spent in discussion. As well as the seminars, attendance at undergraduate tutorials in the various subjects was an optional extra.

Apart from Paul Stirling and Derek Allcorn, I remember few of the lecturers. Dr (later Professor) Frank Parkin (1931–2011) was in overall charge of the MA program and was the lecturer–convenor of the Current Problems in Sociology module. Professor Ray Pahl (1935–2011) ran the Urban Sociology module. Henry (later Professor) Bernstein was in charge of the Sociology of Third World Development. These were the academics I dealt with most frequently. I got to know them well without becoming their friends. They probably kept us at arm's length, maintaining an appropriate distance between themselves and their students. I respected them all greatly for their learning and intellectuality. Other staff members I remember were Richard (later Professor) Scase, Krishan (later Professor) Kumar, Chris (later Professor) Rootes (an Australian), Dr (later Professor) Roy Ellen and Professor Lucy P. Mair (1901–1986), a guest lecturer from the London School of Economics. Professor Mair, a social anthropologist and expert on political development in Britain's African colonies, had spent a

year in PNG 1945–1946 advising the post-war government there. This experience resulted in the book *Australia in New Guinea* (1948 and 1970 [2nd edition]), which became the standard reference on the Australian administration of PNG.

Several of the lecturers and many of the postgraduate students were 'neo-Marxians' if not unabashedly Marxist-Leninist in their politics and sociological perspectives. Like Peter Worsley at the University of Manchester, they favoured the analyses and interpretations pioneered by Karl Marx and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin in their sociological writings. These saw antagonistic social class relations as the determinant of history. Social class in turn arose from the 'relations of production', i.e. where owners, administrators and workers stood in relation to agricultural and manufacturing production. Marxian sociological theory is essentially economic, seeing the social classes of Western society as a function of the capitalist 'mode of production'. Being Marxians, they were convinced that capitalism was doomed; and they were generally apologists for Communism, of both the Soviet and Chinese kinds. Others, notably Derek Allcorn and Frank Parkin, were critical of the Marxian paradigm. Seminars often became contests between them and the neo-Marxians. The great German sociologist, Max Weber (1864–1920) put it succinctly when he said that much sociology is 'a debate with the ghost of Karl Marx'.

I'm now embarrassed to confess that I was greatly influenced by the Marxian paradigm. This can be seen in the topics I chose for four of my nine long essays:

- 'The "Urban Crisis": Proto- and neo-Marxist analyses of urban problems in advanced capitalist societies' (Urban Sociology)
- 'The national bourgeoisie: Are Marxian models adequate? An evaluation of some theories of the national bourgeois class in Third World nations' (Current Problems in Sociology)
- 'The transition to socialism: The relevance of Marxist theory to the experience of underdeveloped nations' (Current Problems in Sociology)
- 'The division of labour as a factor in class formation: Marx's theory and Soviet experience' (Current Problems in Sociology).

Unlike these, my essay topics weren't necessarily seen through a rose-tinted Marxian filter. Where possible, I chose topics in which I could draw from my PNG experience and use available sociological paradigms to explain what was happening in PNG. For instance:

- 'Class formation in Papua New Guinea: Problems in analysing the emergent stratification of a "primitive" nation undergoing economic development and social change' (Problems in Sociological Method)
- 'The effectiveness of participant observation in the study of small-scale societies: An assessment, with special reference to Kenelm Burridge's analysis of the cargo cult in Tangu, Papua New Guinea' (Problems in Sociological Method).

Flipping through several of my essays just now, I can see they were all thoroughly researched, well-written and carefully argued. They were always neatly set out, typed clearly and cleanly, and submitted before the due date. As a result I soon acquired the reputation among the staff of being a hard-working, diligent, reliable and capable student.

My dissertation was of a kind with my essays. It had the title *'Sociological implications of land reform in Papua New Guinea: An appraisal of a proposed scheme for reform'*. My supervisor was Frank Parkin, who obligingly read and commented on my draft dissertation. The dissertation examined the collectivist system of land ownership in PNG before analysing the report and recommendations of PNG's 1973 Commission of Inquiry into Land Matters. It went on to assess the likely impact on PNG communities and the PNG economy if the recommendations were implemented. (As things turned out, they weren't.) At the same time,

it considered the recommendations in the light of current land reform paradigms, including capitalist, behaviourist, and neo-Marxist.

Once the thesis had been submitted, examined and passed, which happened in a rush in July–August 1974, my formal association with the university ended. I was awarded the degree *in absentia* early in 1975 because I couldn't attend the conferral ceremony. By then I was living in Canberra and had begun my PhD research at ANU.

I still occasionally read about the university because I'm somehow on the electronic mailing list for its online newsletter. I revisited the university in 1990, during our first trip back to the UK since returning to Australia 15 years earlier. In Eliot College I found Paul Stirling, who'd visited us in Canberra in 1977 during an Australian tour. He'd retired but was allowed to retain his office there. By that stage, most of the staff from my time had moved on to more senior positions in other universities. He knew little of what had become of my fellow MA students. I couldn't really expect him to remember them. Since my cohort in 1973–74, another 200 students had probably undertaken the MA course. In any case, I'd made no lasting friends among my classmates and wasn't really interested in them.

My fellow students

Like the diploma class, the MA class was a mixed group. Seven of them were English. As well as them and me, the class included an Indian woman from Mauritius, a Greek woman from Cyprus, a Malaysian chap and a Nigerian Catholic priest, Fr Augustine Onwenye Onenyeke, the only one whose name I remember, That made 12 of us. A natural line of cleavage separated us. On the one side were the seven native English students, four men and three women; and on the other were we five 'colonials'. We shared little common ground. The English class members were unwelcoming. They stuck together, leaving us 'colonials' to befriend each other.

Except for one older woman from an up-market village outside Canterbury, who remained aloof from us all, the English students were in their mid- to late-twenties. They seemed to have a huge chip on their collective shoulder. They resented me because they knew I lived in a 'posh' house in a 'desirable' middle-class part of town. That made me 'bourgeois' and therefore a 'class enemy' in their warped Marxist perspective. I also submitted my essays on time and was getting good marks while they were falling behind. They pointedly referred to my 'Stakhanovite' habits, which made them look bad. (This was an allusion to the Stakhanovites, Soviet era super-workers in Russia who greatly exceeded their productivity quotas. They were much resented by the ordinary workers.)

After the classes had been running for several weeks, I began realising that most of the English students didn't know what hard work was or what their obligations were as postgraduate students. We 'colonials' were busily doing our library research, writing our essays, and submitting them punctually. The English class members were meanwhile sitting round the bars in the colleges boozing, smoking and whining about the onerous workload. They were also muttering that Frank Parkin hadn't organised a proper teaching program. It was all seminar papers and no lectures. They had some justification here because Frank's program was very relaxed with no overt instruction at all. Further, the young lecturer in charge of the obligatory Sociological Methods module plainly had little idea what he was supposed to be teaching. Looking back on his uninformative, ill-prepared and poorly run classes, I realise that he knew little more about sociological research techniques than any of us. I guess he'd never worked on any significant sociological research project that would have taught him the basics of research methodology.

Eventually, early December, the English students began clamouring for a staff-student meeting at which they could vent their grievances. They asked the rest of us to stay behind

after class one day to discuss what should be done. It was soon evident that although they wanted a meeting, they didn't know how to go about arranging one. Having organised various workplace meetings over the years, I suggested that they approach Paul Stirling and Frank Parkin to request a meeting, letting them know there were grievances that should be addressed. They then delegated me to discuss the matter with Paul and Frank.

Paul convened the meeting several days later, with all the staff and postgraduate students present. The English class members, who had no leader or spokesperson, again delegated to me the task of presenting their case. I briefly explained that some students were concerned by the loose structure of the MA program, and that the diffuseness of the teaching program was militating against their coping with the workload. It so happened that some of the staff members agreed with the students' grievances. The lecturer who'd run the MA program before Frank Parkin made an impassioned speech about how well structured the program had been when he was responsible for it. He spoke so eloquently that even the most disgruntled of the MA students were feeling sorry for Frank.

The meeting ended inconclusively. Frank made vague assurances about improving the teaching aspect of the program. The disgruntled students were nevertheless happy because they'd been able to sound off. They could also claim that, like good Marxists, they'd taken collective action and had presented a united front. "The students, united, shall never be defeated!" I could hear them inwardly chanting. None of them thanked me for organising the student-staff 'match' and opening the bowling for them. That, I decided, was the last time I'd be their patsy; from now on they could fight their own battles.

After the meeting, I was taken aside by the lecturer who'd been the MA coordinator before Frank Parkin. He said that although the meeting had been worthwhile, we students hadn't played the best card in the pack. If we had done, the staff would have leapt into action to deliver the structured teaching program desired by the MA class. I asked what 'trump card' was. He said it was the university's legal and financial responsibility to run an adequate teaching program. "If you'd said you'd take class legal action against the university for failing to provide the instruction you're paying for," he explained, "the Sociology department, the School of Social Sciences and the university administration would have been falling over themselves to meet your demands."

One sequel to the meeting was the 'banish the blues' end-of-year party that the MA students decided they'd like to run. It would be a student-staff party to signal a new beginning in the MA program. If it were held in one of the college bars it would become a free-for-all. Ideally it would be run in a private home. But whose? All eyes turned to me. I was the only person with a house near the university. Despite misgivings, I agreed to be their patsy once again.

Margaret consented readily. She'd become a highly accomplished hostess through the many staff parties we'd run in PNG. We were old hands at running such events. The great student-staff Sociology party of 1973 accordingly took place at 'Wentways'. We prepared for it as we would have done on the Unitech campus in Lae. Margaret prepared nibbles and a smorgasbord supper of casseroles, roast chicken, vegetables and rice dishes, with a fruit salad-and-cream dessert to follow. I bought four 'slabs' of beer, a few wine casks, soft drinks and fruit juice. I also prepared a couple of gallons of potent fruit punch.

As far as we could tell, the party seemed to be a great success. About 50 people turned up, many students bringing friends. They made quite a crowd in the downstairs section of our house. The hubbub of animated conversation continued until the last of them departed about 1.00 a.m. They drank all the drinks we provided; and the supper vanished as if devoured by a swarm of plague locusts.

If it had been a Unitech party, Margaret and I would have been well pleased with the way it had turned out. We were less than happy with the conduct of our guests, however.

Until now we hadn't known that our way of running an off-campus party wasn't theirs. Their custom was to bring their own drinks — a couple of cans of beer, a half-bottle of wine or some soft drink. The hosts provided nothing but the venue and a few packs of potato crisps. Perhaps our guests saw our generous provision of food and drink as a brash Australian flaunting of wealth. They wolfed down what we'd provided but didn't respect us for having done so. Instead, they were resentful. We overheard a couple of them muttering about 'this bourgeois house'. As we cleaned up afterwards, we found reminders of their disdain. They'd stubbed their cigarettes on the furniture; the smell of the dope they'd smoked (without asking permission to light up) hung in the air; and their cigarette butts were ground into the carpet.

After that, I tried to avoid my English classmates. Individually, I got on well enough with most of them but collectively I found them hard to take. By contrast, I got on very well with the few undergraduate students I got to know through attending undergraduate lectures.

At the same time, I learned to appreciate my fellow 'colonials' the more. They were courteous and friendly. One of them, the Nigerian priest, Fr A.O. Onenyeke, became a good friend of ours during the rest of the time that the course lasted. A jovial, outgoing chap, he came to dinner several times over the following months. Our children loved him, perhaps because he reminded them of the Papua New Guinean friends we'd left behind in Lae. He'd sit with them happily chatting and telling them tales about Nigeria. Fr Augustine also helped me with my dissertation on land reform in PNG. He was interested in my topic, which had parallels in Nigeria. Our discussions gave me a better appreciation of the issues my dissertation was considering. Unfortunately, I lost touch with Fr Augustine after the MA course ended. He went back to Nigeria and we returned to Australia. I've just tried checking him online but can't find much about him. He died in February last year (2022) and was given a grand funeral at the Immaculate Heart church in Ekwulobia, a city in Anambra State, south-eastern Nigeria, with the state governor present. By then he was also Professor Onenyeke, so I guess his academic career had flourished.

One final observation on the Sociology and Anthropology Department is about the background of the teaching staff. All but one were of 'Oxbridge' background — graduates of either Oxford or Cambridge University. Several also held degrees from the London School of Economics. Only one of them was from a 'red-brick' university, i.e. a university established in the 19th century; and none was from a 'plate-glass' university, those which, like Kent itself, were founded after World War II. That to me seemed odd if not sociologically significant. Was it a case of the Oxbridge graduates' bias, of appointing people of the same background to lecturing positions? Did they not believe the 'red-brick' and 'plate-glass' universities capable of producing lecturing staff the equal of those from Oxbridge? Whatever the answers, they seemed to be a self-selecting and self-perpetuating elite who were loth to admit outsiders. In retrospect, I'm sorry I never put such questions to them, especially to the left-leaning, socialism-advocating ones.

The Honda-50 moped

I soon found that walking to and from the university took too long. Catching the bus wasn't a satisfactory alternative, because the walk at each end of the journey was almost as far as the walk from home. To get backwards and forwards, I bought a used Honda-50 'Super Cub' motorbike for about £50. This proved very convenient, and it allowed Margaret to drive our car to school and on shopping trips. It was a reliable, economical little workhorse which used only a pint of petrol a fortnight. From memory, because it only had a 49-cc capacity engine, it was classed as a 'moped' and didn't need to be registered. As well as tootling round town, it enabled me to explore the surrounding countryside. When we left Canterbury at the end of 1974 I gave it to our friend Doug Inkpen, who already had a 'Super Cub' of his own. On

several occasions, Doug and I took trips together on our 'Super-Cubs' to explore the countryside around Canterbury.

The Inkpens

Mention of Doug Inkpen brings me to the family we got to know best during our time in Canterbury — Doug and Margaret Inkpen and their three children, Lindsay, James and Allison. They lived in a housing estate on the north side of Beverley Meadow. Lindsay (girl's name) and Rosie and James and Tony were in the same classes and became each other's best friends, which is how we got to know the family. Doug was a teacher at the Blean school between Canterbury and Whitstable. He and Margaret were both locals who'd grown up in Littlebourne, a village 6 kilometres east Canterbury. All the family were musical and seemed able to play a range of instruments without effort. We went on various excursions with them to see the countryside and villages around Littlebourne and between there and the coast at Sandwich.

Travels around Kent

During our earlier months in Canterbury we had few friends to socialise with; and although a succession of Australian friends came to visit us, we were alone for many weekends. We used the time to explore Kent, which we got to know well. We could accordingly boast that in our 16 months we visited every town and village in the county, saw over all its castles, cathedrals and historic homes (or at least those open to the public), rambled round all its archaeological sites, and had drinks or dined in dozens of its village pubs.

Our favourite places were, first and foremost, Canterbury Cathedral, which I'll write about in a later section. There were many others we liked visiting and taking our Australian visitors to see. They included Bodiam Castle (in nearby East Sussex), which is surrounded by a moat; Leeds Castles, built on an island in a lake; Ightham Moat, a moated, fortified manor house; the 'Wheatsheaf' Inn at Chilham; the Richborough Roman Fort; the ruins of St Mary's Church at Reculver, a Saxon-era structure; the Guildhall at Faversham; the memorial brasses in St Mary's Church at Chartham; the arched bridge over the River Stour at Fordwich, from which Izaak Walton (author of *The Compleat Angler*) is said to have fished; the excavated ruins of the Roman villa at Lullingstone; the memorial brasses in the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Cobham; Sissinghurst Castle and gardens; Hever Castle and gardens; and Dover, Walmer, Deal and Saltwood Castles, the last of these reputedly the place where the four knights who murdered St Thomas a'Becket in 1170 planned the assassination.

In or near Canterbury were St Dunstan's Church, where the head of Sir Thomas More is buried, the Bigbury Camp, an iron-age hill fort in Howfield Wood on Canterbury's western outskirts; St Augustine's Abbey, near Canterbury Cathedral; the King's School in Canterbury, which, founded in 597 AD, is reputedly the world's oldest continually functioning school; Canterbury Castle; and our nearest pub, 'Ye Olde Beverlie', founded in 1570, across the Beverley Meadow and near St Stephen's School.

To describe all these places in detail would take a chapter as long as this already is. I'll spare my readers that. Suffice to say that within a 30-kilometre radius of Canterbury was a bewildering plethora of historic sites. To visit those I've mentioned, and read the guidebooks available at many of them, would be to undergo a thorough course in Kentish history from prehistoric times to the present.

Visitors

Many friends and relatives from Australia and Papua New Guinea visited us at 'Wentways'. Some were touring the UK and made the time to spend an afternoon with us. Several were friends from PNG who, like us, were on sabbatical leave and studying at British universities. Others were either British or had settled in Britain.

Among the most memorable was the visit by Ivor and Pat Salkin and their three children, Vicki, Sean and Simon. They stayed with us for three blissfully happy weeks during the summer of 1974, sharing our life and joining us in many excursions. Margaret remembers a magical concert that she and Pat attended in the cathedral, where they heard the countertenor, Alfred Deller (1912–1979), leading his famous Deller Consort. Deller, a 'Man of Kent' (i.e. born east of the River Medway), had begun his singing career as a cathedral chorister. I remember a happy garden party that Pat, Ivor, Margaret and I enjoyed one warm Sunday afternoon in the grounds of 'Oswalds House' at Bishopsbourne, 6 kilometres south-east of Canterbury. Built in 1701, 'Oswalds' was where the Polish-English novelist, Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), spent the last five years of his life. We dined out with Pat and Ivor several times, too, including at the historic 'Woolpack' pub in Chilham, which dates back to 1480, and the 'George and Dragon' in Fordwich, another 15th century pub.

The sabbatical leave sojourners included Pamela Riley and Neil Hardie, who subsequently married; Hilary and Robert Hind, who were at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, where we also visited them; and Stirling and Rita Henry, who lived in William Goodenough House while Stirling was attending the London School of Economics. Stirling and Rita babysat our children one evening when we went up to London to see a show at one of the West End theatres.

Our friends Sue and Graham McLean visited us from Lymm on a couple of occasions; and we journeyed north several times to stay with them. Their friends, Ian and Ruth Johnson stayed one weekend. Ian had taught Surveying at Unitech, but they'd meanwhile settled in Ireland. Our friend from our Brandi years, Peter Lewis, spent several days with us over the 1973–1974 New Year. Alan Ward (1935–2014), a historian from Latrobe University with an interest in PNG land reform, came with his daughter to spend several days discussing my MA dissertation with me. Hartmut and Sue Holzknecht, anthropologist friends from Lae, also spent a few days with us on their way from Lae to Germany. I vaguely remember that Hector Clark, our next door neighbour in Lae, might also have spent a weekend with us. (If he didn't, he'll soon tell me.)

The relatives who visited included Margaret's first-cousin Cheryl (née Middlin) and her husband, Richard Ham, who were living in London while Richard was spending a year working at the UK office of the ANZ Bank. Margaret's Aunt Betty, her father's second sister, and her husband, Christie Fletcher, spent an entertaining day with us. Over lunch, Christie, a banker and financier with arch-conservative political views, got into a debate with me over socialism. Aunt Betty ended the debate with a characteristically acerbic observation. Looking around our well-appointed dining room, she pronounced, "Well, if this is socialism, let's have more of it!" We were also visited by my Aunty Flo Howie, widow of Rev. Reg Howie, my uncle, and her companion, Jean McLeod, whom we Willis siblings always called 'Aunty' Jean.

Visits

As well as the visitors, we ourselves made many visits to stay with friends and rellies. One memorable excursion with the McLeans was over Christmas 1973, when we journeyed north with them to stay in the self-catering 'Leantack Cottage', a farmhouse between Carrbridge

and Dulnain Bridge in the Cairngorms region of northern Scotland. Getting there was an adventure. After joining Mac and Sue in Lymm, we drove north into Scotland in bitterly cold weather. By the time we got to Aviemore, we were driving through heavy snow. The Willises in their unheated Ford 'Capri' were experiencing the unforeseen hazards of winter motoring in the Highlands. The 'Capri' was British-made, but because ours had been bought in PNG, its heating-demisting system hadn't been included. Well before we reached Aviemore, the windscreen was fogging up heavily, so Margaret had to keep wiping it clear with a cloth as I drove. As we neared Aviemore, the fog began freezing over. No amount of brisk scrubbing by Margaret, or even pressing the warm palms of her hands against the windscreen, could prevent an opaque layer of frost spreading across it, with us still 20 kilometres short of 'Leantack Cottage'.

Fortunately, I was able to pull into a service station in Aviemore, where I explained our difficulties to Mac. Not a problem for this veteran of many a Highlands expedition! He disappeared into the service station and returned a couple of minutes later with an aerosol can of defrosting fluid. A squirt or two from Mac's can instantly de-iced the windscreen. Mac recalls that from Aviemore Margaret and the children travelled with Sue and young Nigel in the McLeans' car while Mac travelled with me to de-ice the windscreen as required. That worked wonderfully well: a couple of squirts every three or four kilometres prevented the fogging and frosting.

When we arrived at 'Leantack Cottage' at about 7.00 p.m., we found that the snow there was even heavier than at Aviemore. Everything inside was frozen — taps, water containers and toilets. Fortunately, a couple of hours after we'd lit a roaring fire the house warmed up and the waterworks thawed. Margaret remembers that she and Sue helped unfreeze the toilets by pouring jugs of boiling water into them. Mac recalls that the next morning, Christmas Day, we chopped up some logs from the forest behind the house to ensure we could keep the cottage cosey.

During our time in the cottage, Mac took me on one of his favourite walks. We spent a day trying to climb Cairn Gorm, the mountain after which the region is named. We didn't get to the top because we were caught in a blizzard of swirling, driving snow as we approached the summit. We retreated to a 'bothy' in a nearby valley — what we'd call a bushwalkers' hut in Australia — to wait until the snow-squall passed. When we pushed open the door, we found about 20 other walkers crammed inside waiting out the storm. We chatted with them for an hour or so until Mac guessed it was safe to return to the car.

Mac tells me that the bothy was called 'Jean's Hut' and that it was named for Jean McIntyre Smith, a young woman who'd been killed in a skiing accident in 1948. Her parents had it built nearby in 1951 as a memorial to her. He also says that in the meantime the national park authority responsible for the Cairngorms removed the bothy in 1986. The bureaucrats' misguided reason was that the bothy's presence might encourage climbers to rely on it and then go climbing in bad weather. In Australia, the same wrong-headed bureaucratic attitude has seen bushwalkers' huts removed from the Kosciuszko national park.

We also spent Easter 1974 with Mac and Sue in a hotel in the Lake District, in Coniston if I remember correctly. During that trip Mac and I undertook a hard but popular walk from Wasdale up to Scafell Pike, a high rocky ridge above Wastwater. It seemed we had the wide landscape to ourselves until we scrambled up a rock wall to the ridge-top, where we found about 50 other walkers perched on rocks admiring the magnificent view across the lake. I realised then how geographically small England is compared to Australia. On the Wastwater (western) side was a seemingly empty vista; but on the eastern side were farmhouses and farmers herding sheep several hundred metres away. England has several sparsely populated regions, including the Lake District, where the houses are few and far between; however,

over much of the country one can never be more than a couple of kilometres from the nearest habitation.

I mentioned in an earlier chapter that we spent a weekend with Eric and Olive Duncanson at Burnham-on-Crouch, where they'd retired after leaving Unitech at the end of 1971. I've also said in this chapter that we visited my Uncle Rupert Willis at Heswall near Birkenhead. We subsequently saw Uncle Rupert on other occasions. We spent a happy weekend with him at his son Trevor Willis's house at Biddenham, a village on Bedford's western outskirts. During that visit we got to know Trevor's family well — his wife Joan and children Jane and Christopher, respectively aged 18 and 16. (Trevor had always been a special cousin for me — something like the big brother I never had; we remained good friends as well as cousins until his death last year at age 96.) We later spent a week in Penzance, Cornwall, staying with Uncle Ru at the Abbey Hotel. We made a series of day trips with him as he introduced us to our ancestral county. He was extraordinarily kind to us, especially to Margaret, who was the second Margaret Willis in his life, after his late wife.

One week-long trip we made alone was to Salisbury to see the Cathedral and nearby Old Sarum. We went on to tour Stonehenge. After that, we visited Glastonbury Abbey, headed north to see Bristol, drove across the Severn Bridge into Wales, then toured Tintern Abbey. After driving west across the Brecon Beacons National Park, where I took some time out to run to the top of the tallest hill I could see, we toured a series of castles up the west coast of Wales — Pembroke, Cardigan, Aberystwyth, Harlech and Carnarvon. Truly awesome, they were testimony to the Norman and Angevin kings' prolonged subjugation of the Welsh between the 11th and 14th centuries.

During our excursion through Wales we became aware of the Welsh nationalist movement. In most places we visited, the town, traffic and street signs were bilingual, written in both Welsh and English, usually with the Welsh above and the English below. 'Croeso i Cymru'/'Welcome to Wales', 'Abertawe'/'Swansea', 'Aberteifi'/'Cardigan', 'Canol y dref'/'Town centre', 'Porthaethwy'/'Menai Bridge', 'Arafwch nawr'/'Reduce speed now', 'Ffordd ymlaen ar gau'/'Road closed ahead', 'Trowch i'r dir'/'Turn left' and so on and on. We often saw that the English had been spray-painted over, leaving only the Welsh. That sometimes confused us in knowing where we were, but it made the nationalists' point that Cymraeg/Welsh is the first language of Cymru/Wales.

We had one direct personal experience of strident Welsh nationalism in Aberystwyth. We'd arrived at our B&B late afternoon. After checking in, we drove downtown to dine in what looked like a convivial restaurant. The young female receptionist greeted us in Welsh. Guessing she'd said something like 'Good evening', we responded in English and asked for a table for five. She ushered us to a table on the far side of the room, where we sat down. Expecting her to bring the menu, we waited and waited and waited. Meanwhile, other parties were entering, being seated, and their orders taken — in Welsh.

We continued sitting and waiting, but the waiters studiously ignored us. Eventually I went across to the counter and asked the receptionist if she intended sending a waiter to take our order and serve us. I pointed out that various other parties who'd come after us had been served their pre-dinner drinks and were now dining. Irritably, she said we'd be next. Five minutes later a waiter came to ask what we wanted. Another half-hour passed before our orders arrived. By this time we'd been in the restaurant for an hour. We were served ungraciously. The Welsh-speaking patrons, on the other hand, were served promptly and cheerfully. Our 'offence', it seems, had been to choose to dine in a 'Cymraeg-ophile' restaurant without speaking the language. We departed aggrieved. We could sympathise with Welsh nationalist aspirations but the way the staff had expressed these to us their Australian visitors had been churlishly xenophobic. Fortunately, we never experienced anything like it on our subsequent travels in Wales.

Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury Cathedral proved endlessly fascinating. Every visit I ever made there was a joy. It was only a ten-minute walk from 'Wentways'; and its bells used to wake us every Sunday morning. We got to know it very well because we often went there to explore it further; and we took all our visitors there. One could spend a lifetime visiting the cathedral daily and still have much to learn. I won't dwell on it here. Any reader keen to know more about the cathedral could profitably read its *Wikipedia* entry. Suffice to say here that it dates back to about 597 AD when St Augustine of Canterbury arrived in Kent with instructions from Pope Gregory I to begin converting the pagan Anglo-Saxons. Anyone remotely keen on history will find something interesting in its every corner and crevice. After Stonehenge, the Tower of London, Windsor Castle, the Kew Botanic Gardens and several others, it comes in as the 9th most popular tourist destination in England. About a million visitors go there annually.

My own most memorable visit was with Graham McLean. We went there late one Saturday afternoon as dusk was gathering. The cathedral was ablaze with light, a rare occurrence. As we entered, we walked into a 'wall of sound', to use a later phrase. The cathedral was packed out — standing room only — because unbeknown to us the Royal School of Church Music was conducting its annual choral eisteddfod. We'd entered as the massed choirs with orchestral and pipe-organ backing were singing their concluding anthem. Whatever the anthem was, it was the most sublime musical experience of my entire life.

Our children's memories

We have many fond recollections of our children's time in Britain. One abiding memory is of the first snowfall they experienced, probably in late November 1973. Margaret and I were just waking up one Sunday morning when Rosie burst into the room. "Come and see," she exclaimed excitedly, "there's white stuff everywhere outside and it's just like ice-cream!" They'd already been eating it. We went to the bedroom window, which overlooked Beverley Meadow. Before us was a snow-blanketed vista. "It's called snow, and people will soon be making snowmen from it and throwing snowballs at each other," we said. They dashed outside again to build a snowman in the front yard. They were back inside again within 15 minutes, crying because their hands and feet were aching with the cold. I guess we changed them into warmer clothes, sat them near the radiators, and gave them mugs of hot cocoa to drink. We probably explained they should wear the right clothing for adventures in the snow — warm woollen socks and waterproof footwear, heat-retaining woollen pants and jumper, gloves and beanie, and a weatherproof jacket.

One of Margaret's favourite stories is of the time she was working in the kitchen, when she heard a ruckus going on overhead. On going upstairs to investigate, she saw Tony outside his open bedroom window standing on the sloping roof of the small porch at the front door. His foot was in a loop at one end of a rope, the other end of which was tied round the leg of his bed. His mate James Inkpen was standing inside beside the window ready to feed out more rope. Margaret yelled at him, telling him to climb back inside immediately. When she asked what they were up to, he explained that they'd heard about abseiling and were trying it out. Margaret pointed out that if he'd slipped and fallen he'd have dangled upside down and James wouldn't have been strong enough to haul him back inside. Worse, he could have landed on his head on the concrete path.

I have a couple of favourite memories of Katie. A few days after she'd started school at St Stephen's I asked her if she liked being a schoolgirl. "No!" she replied emphatically. "Why not? Isn't your Mum a good teacher?" "It's the pink stuff!" she explained. Further

questioning elicited that the 'pink stuff' was the raspberry flummery dessert served to the children each day during lunch in the school canteen. Every now and then over succeeding weeks I'd ask her if she was enjoying school yet. The answer was always the same — "No! All that pink stuff!" The Katie memory I treasure the most, however, is from the time we visited Stonehenge. As we walked around inspecting it, she discovered a niche at the foot of one of the sarsen standing stones. Squeezing her little body into it, she peeked out cheekily at us. The photo I took of her is my favourite from the time she was a little girl.

Each of the children have their own special memories. Rosie tells me that hers is of 'Blue Peter', the world's longest running children's TV program, which began in 1958. They saw it for the first time in the days after we'd arrived in Canterbury, on a TV set in the front window of an electrical goods retailer. They'd never seen colour TV before. Rosie says they were instantly captivated, and stood watching it, their noses against the glass, until we hauled them away to wherever we were going next. After we'd taken up residence in 'Wentways', they rarely missed a 'Blue Peter' episode. One show had a segment about 'mudlarking' — treasure hunting along the Thames mudflats in London at low tide. After seeing the marvellous artefacts the 'mudlarks' were turning up, Rosie took Tony outside to go mudlarking along the ditch beneath the trees on the eastern side of Beverley Meadow. Within a few minutes Rosie had found a shiny silver sixpence, and Tony had an ornate little perfume bottle. Well satisfied, they went back inside and continued watching 'Blue Peter'.

Katie tells me she remembers walking to and from school across Beverley Meadow. She thought it was a hugely long trek for a little girl like her to be made to endure. When she returned to Canterbury in 1993, while backpacking around Europe with her friend Tracey, she was surprised to discover how short the distance was. She was also pleased that without the aid of street-maps she and Tracey were able to walk from the cathedral to 'Wentways' within 10 minutes, unerringly finding their way along the maze of alleyways and footpaths as we'd done 20 years earlier. She also remembers drawing pictures of herself in her workbook at school day after day and writing "Just me" beneath. She says that Margaret annoyed her greatly by suggesting that she should draw and write something else. Another of her memories is of the roadmap of Britain we had pinned to the back of the kitchen door. On it we'd traced all our trips with a red 'Texta' marker. By the time we left Canterbury, the map resembled a red spider's web. It used to surprise our English visitors. On seeing it, one of Margaret's St Stephen's colleagues observed that she and her family hardly ever travelled away from Canterbury. "We set out to visit Stonehenge once," she remarked, "but when the rain began falling we drove back home before we got there."

The local 'Spar' corner store is among Tony's fond memories. It was on Hales Drive adjacent to the junior school. The children used to call in there on their way home from school to buy lollies with whatever coins they could scrounge. His favourite recollection, however, is of the 'Tarzan' rope hanging from the branch of one of the large trees growing along the top of the embankment on the western side of Beverley Meadow. (The embankment, only 100 metres from 'Wentways', is a remnant of the old Canterbury–Whitstable railway line, which was in use 1830–1952.) The 'Tarzan' rope was so popular with the local children that to swing from it after school and at weekends they had to queue to take their turn. Tony decided to beat the crowds by rising early one Saturday morning. He was at the swing by 7.00 o'clock. With the rope to himself, he spent a happy time swinging out high above the meadow. The pleasure was soon tempered by pain, however, because after he'd returned home his overworked abdominal muscles became so sore that any movement was agony.

Interestingly, in recent weeks Tony has reconnected with one of his St Stephen's chums, Paul Surridge, who now lives in Sydney. This came about through Tony's intermittent communications with James Inkpen, with whom we've kept in touch. James let

Tony know that Paul is now living here. We remember Paul, perhaps because his St Stephen's nickname, 'Paul Sausage', was one not readily forgotten. He moved from Canterbury to Sydney with his family five years ago when he came to open a branch of the firm he works for. His wife was in the same St Stephen's class as James, Tony and Paul; and Tony remembers her well for having the best handwriting of all their classmates.

Job hunting

Even before my Sociology course concluded, I'd begun looking for my next job. I'd decided I wanted to embark on a PhD in History at the Australian National University in Canberra, but as I was 37 and the age limit for ANU doctoral scholarships was 30, I couldn't be sure I'd be admitted. We'd decided we wouldn't return to Lae, so I began applying for academic jobs.

I was granted an interview for a junior lecturing position in the Department of Sociology at the university that I thought I had an outside chance of gaining. I interviewed well and I know the staff were impressed by my achievements in the MA program. Henry Bernstein, the lecturer in charge of the Sociology of Third World Development, was keen for me to be appointed and supported me, but I didn't get the job. I did, however, win two other positions. The first was in Lusaka, lecturing in Sociology at the University of Zambia. I might have taken that job, even though it would have meant severing my ties with the UK and possibly not being able to return. The Zambian government soon made the decision for me. Following a season of sustained political unrest among the students, the government shut down the university until further notice. I wrote to say my thanks for my appointment but pointed out that I was unwilling to arrive in Lusaka to take up an indefinitely suspended job that might no longer exist by the time I got there.

The other appointment was to a lectureship at the recently founded Churchlands Teachers' College in Perth, Western Australia. After opening in 1972, the college merged with WA's other teachers' colleges in 1981 as the WA College of Advanced Education, which in 1991 became the Edith Cowen University. Though in time the job might accordingly have led somewhere, I turned it down because we didn't really want to settle in Perth. Being back in Australia but over 2700 kilometres from our families in Melbourne on the far side of the Nullabor Plain was an unwelcome prospect. In any case, my chances of winning a PhD scholarship at ANU had recently improved, as I point out in a later section. With the benefit of hindsight, I can appreciate that all these positions would have been wrong turnings for me, leading me away from my allotted life's work as a practising historian.

Excursion to Neuendettelsau

During the second term vacation in 1974 we spent a fortnight driving to and from Bavaria. The purpose of the trip was to visit our Lae friends, the Rev. Karl and Mrs Helene Holzknecht, their son Hartmut and his wife Sue, and Helene's father, the Rev. Gottfried Schmutterer (1884–1976). Rev. Schmutterer had been the first white man to live near where Lae later developed. He had opened the Lutheran mission at Ampo near Butibam village in 1910. He and his wife raised their family there before they retired to Neuendettelsau. Karl and Helene, who had been the missionaries at Kaiapit in the upper Markham Valley north-west of Lae, has assisted me in my MA research on mission history around Lae; so, too, had Hartmut and Sue, who were anthropologists. As mentioned, Hartmut, Sue and their infant son Martin had stayed with us in Canterbury midyear on their way from Lae to Neuendettelsau.

Neuendettelsau is a large village in the Franconian region of Bavaria, 32 kilometres south-west of Nüremberg and 20 kilometres east of Ansbach, the regional capital. It was where the Lutheran Church in Germany ran a major seminary for training missionaries for the

church's overseas missions, including those in New Guinea. After their decades on the missionfield ended, many of the missionaries retired to the village.

I had written extensively about Rev. Schmutterer in my book *Lae: Village and City*, which was in the process of being published. He was eager to meet me, and I him, so Karl and Helene had written to say that if we could get ourselves to Neuendettelsau, we could stay with them in the apartment they were renting while Karl was finishing off some translation work in Atzera, the Kaiapit language.

We drove from Canterbury to Neuendettlsau, camping along the way in a large tent that Doug Inkpen loaned us. The first leg of the journey was the hovercraft 'flight' between Ramsgate and Calais. We then drove to Paris, where we stayed in a camping ground for several days while visiting places like the Eiffel Tower, the Cathedral of Notre Dame and the Palace of Versailles. After that, we made our way south-east across France to Geneva, eastwards through Switzerland via Berne and Lucerne to Vaduz in Liechtenstein, then north to Bregenz on Lake Constance in Austria, near the German border. From there, we drove north across Bavaria, crossing the Danube at Ulm.

We weren't quite sure where Neuendettelsau was amidst the maze of picturesque rural villages of Bavaria, but we knew it was somewhere near Ansbach, so that's where we headed. We stopped in a couple of villages to ask the way. It was at this point that my schoolboy German was truly useful for the first time in my life. *"Entschuldigen Sie mich bitte, aber wo is die Strasse nach Neuendettelsau?"* ('Excuse me, please, but where is the road to Neuendettelsau?') The villagers, pleased to hear a 'Britisher' trying to speak German very politely, were eager to assist. We accordingly reached the Holzknecht apartment safely late that afternoon.

Along the way we'd had numerous adventures and exchanges with the locals. In Geneva, for instance, we had to go to a bank to change our French Francs into Swiss ones. While we were waiting, I noticed an elderly bloke looking intently at copper-haired little Katie. Seeing me, he said, *"Anglais!" "Non!"* I replied. He looked confused because to him she must have looked like a very English little girl, so I added, *"Australienne."* He nodded sagely, *"Je comprends. Très belle!"* (I understand. Very beautiful!)

In Bregenz we dined in a tavern where some sort of party was going on among a group of *Lederhosen*-clad older chaps and their *Dirndl*-wearing wives. They eyed us suspiciously at first, because we were so obviously foreigners; but when they started singing their beerhall songs, they invited us to join in. *"Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit!"* ('A toast, a toast to wellbeing!') I sang lustily in my best German accent, which pleased them greatly.

And in one of the villages between Ulm and Neuendettelsau where we'd stopped to ask the way, we got caught up in a religious procession making its way to the local Catholic church. The villagers were wearing traditional garb, marching behind an 'Oompah' brass band, and holding aloft images of the Virgin and their local patron saint. I pulled over to the side of the road to let them pass, but when the procession drew level with us it stopped. The people broke ranks to inspect this strange band of aliens come among them. They crowded round the car, looking in, taking note of the camping gear packed on the roof-rack, pointing out to each other the car-brand ('Ford Capri') and the exotic number plate. *"Wer sind Sie? Warum sind Sie in unser Dorf gekommen?"* ('Who are you? Why have you come to our village?') Clambering from the car, I explained that we were tourists from Australia on our way to visit friends in Neuendettelsau. They gaped in amazement, taking in my jeans, pullover and sneakers. After I repeated my well-practised question about the road to Neuendettelsau, one of the chaps pointed ahead. *"Vielen Dank!"* (Thanks very much!) We resumed our journey; they resumed their procession.

We spent several very happy days with the Holzknechts. They showed us round the seminary and its library. They took us on sight-seeing and shopping expeditions into

Nüremberg and Ansbach. For me, the most fascinating of these excursions was to Wolframs-Eschenbach, a well-preserved mediaeval walled town named for its most famous son, Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170–1220). (Wolfram was the minstrel who composed *Parzival*, the romance about an Arthurian knight on a quest to discover the Holy Grail.)

The happiest part of my time in Neuendettelsau was my meeting with Rev. Schmutterer. We instantly and instinctively warmed to each other. He'd forgotten how to speak English and my German was hesitant, but we had a great conversation. The next year I sent him a copy of *Lae: Village and City*, which on one page contained adjacent quarter-page portraits of him and his wife. He was delighted with it. Mistakenly thinking it was his biography, he showed it to all his visitors. "This is my book," he'd tell them; "it's all about my life in New Guinea."

On our way back to Canterbury, we camped beside the Neckar River in Heidelberg the first night. The next day we drove on to Frankfurt-am-Mein, where we spent several hours looking over the Goethe House, a museum in the former home of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Germany's greatest writer. I can't remember where we camped that night, but I recall crossing the Rhine over the Rodenkirchen Bridge and driving past Cologne Cathedral the next morning. We made it back to Canterbury late that afternoon after driving non-stop across Belgium to Calais for the hovercraft trip back across the Channel to Ramsgate.

Looking back on where we went and what we did, I'm surprised by how far we travelled and how much activity we crammed into our fortnight abroad. I suppose I must have been relieved that we'd driven some 3000 kilometres without mishap in a right-hand-drive car travelling on the right-hand side of the road from Calais to Bavaria and back. Driving for the first time on what seemed like the wrong side of the road took some getting used to; but the only time it could have caused difficulties was the morning we drove away from the camping ground outside Paris. Instinctively, I began driving up the left lane, but I quickly realised my mistake when a car came over the brow of the hill before us — in the same lane as us. Fortunately, it was about 300 metres away and I had no traffic behind me, so I could safely swerve across the road into the correct lane.

The Archbishop's School

Back in Canterbury, a new school term was about to begin. By now we knew we'd be returning to Australia at the end of the year because I'd been awarded the PhD scholarship described in the next section. I nevertheless had to fill in time doing something because Margaret wished to finish her year's teaching at St Stephen's, and we wanted the children to complete their year at school too. I therefore opted to do 'supply' or relief teaching. I visited the Canterbury office of the Kent Education Authority, to see if I could be placed. Immediate success! The obliging chief clerk told me there was a six-week vacancy at the Archbishop's School, an Anglican secondary school only 400 metres up the road from 'Ye Olde Beverlie'. He rang ahead to tell the principal I was on my way.

Ten minutes later I was at the school being greeted and interviewed by the headmistress. I forget her name, but she was a cheerful elderly single lady. She seemed impressed by my qualifications and experience. We agreed that I should start work at the beginning of term the next week. I would not be assigned to any particular class but would be available to fill in for absent teachers.

I experienced a strange epiphany on my first morning at the Archbishop's School. The school term began with a general assembly in the hall. As I stood with other teachers along the side, I looked around the neatly uniformed students seated row by row in their class groups. Amazingly, they all looked the same! They seemed to be tall and slender, with long

heads, aquiline noses, straight blonde hair and blue eyes. The sensation was much like the time I'd faced my first class at Brandi High School 8½ years earlier — "How will I ever manage to tell them apart?" I might have discussed the matter with Paul Stirling, who probably told me that the people of east Kent were a distinctive racial sub-type, the descendants of the Jutes from northern Denmark who'd invaded and populated the region in the second half of the 5th century. Whatever the explanation, I realised for the first time that I didn't look 'Kentish' or even 'English' because my racial origins were mainly Celtic from Cornwall and southern Scotland.

I don't recall my first teaching experience at the school, but in the subjects I was competent to teach — English, History, Geography — I taught actively, running the absentees' classes competently. In the Science and Maths classes I 'babysat', ensuring that the students worked purposefully on exercises from their textbooks. I also did playground duty and monitored student behaviour in the corridors. If I became aware during one of my free periods that a class was unattended, I'd supervise it until the teacher returned or until the bell rang for the end of the period. This was what I'd have done in an Australian school but, as I soon learned, that wasn't the English way of doing things. Teachers taught their own classes but didn't accept wider and more general responsibilities unless directed by the principal. Miss Headmistress liked my style. On one occasion she complimented me by exclaiming, "You colonials are such *vigorous* people! I don't need to tell you what to do because you just pitch in to help wherever it's needed." (The other 'colonial' was the Music teacher, a New Zealander who was also a part-time organist at the cathedral.)

The Archbishop's School was a largish school with about 600 students and 70 staff. Although it was an Anglican Church-sponsored school, it operated within the government system. It was a 'Secondary Modern' rather than a 'Comprehensive' or a 'Grammar' school, the other types of school in the government secondary school sector. For readers unfamiliar with English secondary education back then, I'll explain that there were elite 'Public Schools', which we in Australia call private schools. Like the best known of them — Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Rugby, the King's School etc — they were boarding schools, usually ancient, and charged such high fees that only children from the very wealthiest families could afford to attend them. Then there were 'Direct Grant Schools'. These were academically selective private schools where a quarter of the student places were funded by the central government and the other three-quarters were privately funded, usually by the students' parents. And finally there were the government schools, i.e. Grammars, Comprehensives and Secondary Moderns, which were funded by the Local Education Authorities.

The Grammars were academically selective. They creamed off the top 5% of students exiting the primary schools. The criterion for selection was high attainment in the '11+' exam. This was a battery of English, Maths, IQ and general knowledge tests taken during Grade 6 after the students had turned 11. As the Grammars assumed that all their students would eventually go to university, they taught a rigorous academic curriculum. In Form 1 (Year 7) the students accordingly studied English, French, Latin, Algebra, Geometry, Arithmetic, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History and Geography as well as Art, Physical Education and Music. (With some nudging from us, Rosie was admitted into and spent a term at Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School, an institution dating back to the mid-13th century and Canterbury's one Grammar School for girls.)

The Comprehensives were all-ability non-selective schools analogous to government high schools in Australia. There weren't any in Canterbury but they existed elsewhere in Kent, for example in Maidstone, the country town. Canterbury, a bastion of Capital-C Conservatism, wouldn't countenance such a dangerously radical notion as academically non-streamed schools.

The Secondary Moderns took the students who didn't get into the Grammars, i.e. the 95% of children deemed to be 'lower-performing', unlikely to be able to cope with the Grammars' academic program, and probably incapable of undertaking university studies. They went only to Form 5 (Year 11) and those satisfactorily completing the five-year program were awarded the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE). The CSE was a qualification of limited portability. It didn't qualify its holders for university entrance or entry into teachers' and nursing colleges. Nor was it a passport into a job in the civil service or the municipal offices. It qualified them for little more than work as sales assistants and junior clerks. Any CSE-holder who aspired higher than that had to enrol in the local Polytech (technical college) to gain the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) at the 'O' (Ordinary) or 'A' (Advanced) Level, the qualifications gained by Grammar school students. The A Level was required for university entrance.

From my outsider's standpoint, the pernicious aspect of the Secondary Modern system was that the students knew they'd been streamed into schools for those of lower ability, from whom not much could be expected. The teachers were also streamed. The high achievers with good degrees from respected universities taught in the Grammar Schools; those with only teachers' college diplomas had to be content with jobs in the Secondary Moderns. The pervasive sense within the Secondary Moderns was one of inferiority, of being among second-class people in second-class institutions.

Despite that, the staff at the Archbishop's School considered themselves and the school more genteel and superior to the ordinary secular schools. As an Anglican school, it required its aspiring enrolees to produce a letter from the vicar of the church they attended attesting to their Anglican bona fides. I was faintly amused by this petty snobbery. For their part, the staff members didn't quite know what to make of me. Because I was indelibly Australian, some thought I could be patronised as a 'colonial'; on the other hand, they knew my tertiary qualifications were greatly superior to any of theirs, and at the same time there was grudging respect for my competence as a teacher.

The Chartham School

After my six weeks at the Archbishop's School, I moved to the Chartham School, 7 kilometres south-west of Canterbury, for the remaining seven weeks of the term. Chartham, in the village of the same name, was another Secondary Modern, but a rural one. It drew its students from the surrounding villages and farms. Again, I was a relieving teacher, but my teaching load was heavier than at the Archbishop's School. That was because my teaching colleagues soon recognised that I was a diligent, well-experienced teacher who could be trusted to manage their classes well. I made various friends among them but maintained contact with none of them after returning to Australia.

In the subjects I could teach well, I gave my best. In those beyond my competence, Science and Maths, I'd have the students work on text-book exercises for the first half of the period, then I'd read to them from a story book from the library, just like I'd done at Warrambeen 10 years earlier. They loved these story-time sessions. Even the 'toughies' among the Form 4 boys would sit there raptly listening to the story. "You're a great teacher," one of them remarked, "because you're the only one who reads us stories."

I also introduced Australian Rules football to Chartham. That was because the Phys. Ed. teacher, a Welshman, had to return home for a funeral. He asked me to take his classes. "What do you want me to teach them?" I asked; "I've never ever taught Phys. Ed., so I wouldn't know where to start." "Teach them that funny kind of football you play in Australia," he suggested. I said that if he could find me a rugby ball, his classes would be playing Aussie Rules by the time he returned. He located a rugby ball, so I spent several days

teaching successive classes the rudiments of the game. They'd only ever played soccer before, but they picked it up quickly and enjoyed it so much that they'd organise their own scratch matches during the lunch break, calling on me to umpire.

I forget the headmaster's name. He remained aloof from his staff, but I knew he approved of me. He asked me to stay on at the school as a permanent staff member. He said he could easily arrange a work permit for me, which would have entitled me to remain in Britain semi-permanently. I was tempted by the offer, because Peggy Hayes at St Stephen's Junior School had made a similar offer to Margaret. We discussed whether or not we should stay on, drawing up a 'balance sheet' of the 'pros and cons'. On the 'pro' side, we loved living in Canterbury. We'd adapted well to life in England, had settled in comfortably and had made good friends. The children were happy in their schools and among their friends. We enjoyed our teaching jobs and could expect to advance up the promotional ladder.

They were the 'pluses', but the 'contras' outweighed them. First, we'd have to vacate 'Wentways' eventually and would then have to buy into an expensive housing market on our pitifully meagre teaching salaries. The best we could hope for was a cramped apartment on a housing estate, which was what many of our teaching colleagues lived in. Second, we were feeling guilty about our parents in Melbourne. Both Margaret's parents and mine had suffered serious illnesses during the year, but of course we hadn't been available to share the burden of care with our siblings. We each belonged to close-knit families and accordingly accepted our responsibilities to our parents. Third, perhaps perversely, we wanted our children to grow up being Australian, but that wouldn't happen unless we returned home. Fourth, the climate and weather were factors. For most of the time Canterbury, if not the rest of Britain, seemed grey and cold, with frequent chilling rain. During the 'warm' months, late June to early September, the temperature varies from about 14°C *to* 21°C, which didn't seem very warm to us*;* but over the cold months, November–March, it ranges between only *3*°C and 7°C, and that seemed little better than frigid. During the long winter months the children would leave for school before daylight and by the time they'd walked home in the afternoon, night was falling. When I was writing my essays on cold, overcast days as the temperature was struggling to reach a maximum of *5*°C with frost still on the ground in shady places at midday, my thoughts would turn longingly to home — "If I were in Australia right now, I could be lying in the sun on the beach at Ocean Grove!" Finally, and the clincher, was the PhD scholarship I'd recently been offered at ANU. I knew by now that History was my vocation, and that to be taken seriously as an historian I must earn a PhD and then lecture in history at a reputable university. And so we decided to quit Canterbury for Canberra.

An ANU scholarship

My quest for an ANU scholarship began with letters to and from my UPNG historian friend, Hank Nelson, who'd relocated to ANU as a research fellow in History in the Research School of Pacific Studies during 1973. His advice was that to be accepted as a PhD student I should have a well-thought-out research topic in mind, and I should demonstrate that I'd already discussed it with ANU historians, whom I should name as referees. He suggested that I visit Professor Robin (Bob) Gollan (1917–2007), who held the chair in History in ANU's School of General Studies and was currently on study leave at the London School of Economics. Hank also suggested that I contact Stewart Firth, another research fellow in Hank's department, who'd been an early staff member of the UPNG History Department. He'd recently returned from Oxford after completing a DPhil on the German empire in the Pacific.

The topic I decided on, 'elite formation in Papua New Guinea', could have been in Sociology or History. Because of my recent sociological studies, I straddled both disciplines and I thought the topic combined elements of each. With hindsight, I now realise that the

topic was unlikely to acquire wheels, but back then as PNG approached independence it seemed attractive.

I wrote to both Bob and Stewart outlining my ideas. Each responded promptly and positively. Bob suggested that I come up to London to discuss my proposed project. I can't recall where we met, but we spent a pleasant hour and a half together and he agreed to be one of my referees.

I duly applied to ANU for one of its coveted PhD scholarships. I named Hank, Bob and Stewart as referees, outlined my proposed research project, and indicated that I'd discussed it thoroughly with them. A few weeks later when the ANU Registrar wrote to offer the scholarship, I felt like I'd won Tatts-Lotto. The scholarships were normally awarded to candidates under 30, but I was already 37 and would have turned 38 by the time I reached ANU.

Our parents were delighted that we'd be returning permanently to Australia, albeit to Canberra rather than Melbourne. We hadn't seen them for two years. We'd kept in touch through regular letters and occasional phone calls; but as I can now appreciate with our own children and grandchildren, that's no substitute for being able to see each other face-to-face.

Packing up to return to Australia

We decided to leave Canterbury at the end of the year and to move to Canberra before the end of January. That would give us several weeks to reconnect with Australia then let the children start in their new schools at the beginning of the Australian school year. It would also allow Margaret time to find her next teaching job.

Our last few weeks in Canterbury were a flurry of packing up, making travel arrangements, selling the car, arranging for the shipment of our accumulated possessions, and handing back the 'Wentways' keys to the estate agent. The usual end-of-year celebrations and a series of farewells by our friends and teaching colleagues also had to be survived.

Margaret fondly remembers her farewell from St Stephen's. The parents put on a special morning tea for her on her last day at the school. Every family was represented. They presented her with a framed pencil drawing of St Augustine's Gate by a local artist, Les Marsh. It shows a side elevation of the elaborate Gothic gatehouse of St Augustine's Abbey which had been built in the early 14th century. One of our treasures, it hangs in our guest bedroom. Another gift was a hand-knitted layette for Katie's favourite doll, 'Teeny Tiny Tears', which Mrs Madge, mother of Katie's classmate, Philip, had produced. It came with a card saying, "Thank you for sharing your mother with us."

We spent Christmas 1974 in Canterbury then a couple of days later caught the train up to London. We had booked ourselves into the B&B in Sussex Gardens, Paddington, where we'd stayed on our arrival in England 16 months earlier. We were due to fly out from Heathrow late on New Year's Eve. We spent the intervening days sight-seeing. One trip I recall making was a tour of St Paul's Cathedral, which I hadn't seen before. Another, which I made alone, was to climb The Monument, the tall memorial near the northern end of London Bridge marking the place where the Great Fire of London had begun in 1666.

We had one odd experience in the restaurant near our B&B where we ate our evening meals. The first time we entered, as we took our seats I noticed another young family at a nearby table. They were mixed-race — white, blonde-haired wife, dark husband, little children in between. I took scarcely any notice of them, but about five minutes later I looked up to see the dark chap standing at our table. In a very broad Australian accent, he asked, "Do you know where the Australian embassy is?" At first I thought he was stirring me, affecting an exaggerated Australian accent provocatively. I replied that Australia had no embassy in Britain but maintained a 'High Commission' at Australia House on The Strand. I asked why

he wished to know. He then said he'd recognised our Australian accents. He and his family were also Australians, from Darwin, and had been travelling round Britain. "We've heard there's been a big blow back home, so we want to visit the embassy to find out what's happened," he explained.

The 'big blow' he mentioned was Cyclone Tracy, which late on Christmas Eve and early Christmas morning 1974 had devastated Darwin. Winds of about 220 kilometres an hour had flattened much of the city, destroying 80% of all the houses, killing 71 people and leaving 25,000 homeless. We knew about the cyclone but little about the wreckage it caused because we hadn't been keeping up with the news from home.

Our new friend, who was Aboriginal, said he and his brother ran a building construction firm in Darwin. He was worried about his house and relatives and hoped he might learn more if he visited the 'embassy'. I told him that the High Commission was a couple of miles east of Sussex Gardens and suggested that he catch a cab there next morning. By chance, the next evening we dined together again in the same restaurant. "Did you find the High Commission?" I asked; "And how are the rellies in Darwin?". He said the High Commission staff had helped him contact his brother, who'd told him that his house had been wrecked, but that his car and truck in the garage space beneath the house hadn't been damaged. "We're sorry to hear that," I responded, "but looking on the bright side, there'll be ample work for builders in Darwin for years to come." We didn't see him again, so I suppose he and his family had flown home to whatever awaited them in Darwin. We followed several days later.

We left England with regrets. We'd been very happy in Canterbury. We'd made good friends there, enjoyed the lifestyle and had merged effortlessly into our local community. Wherever we'd been we'd been well accepted and had never experienced prejudice because of being Australian. We hoped we'd be able to return within a couple of years, but it was 15 years before we did. Our studies, careers and family responsibilities in Canberra had meanwhile kept us firmly anchored there.

We eventually returned during our long service leave in 1990. We spent a fortnight in the area, staying in Littlebourne with Doug and Margaret Inkpen, who'd moved into Doug's parents' home after they'd died. We revisited all our old haunts, but most of the people we'd known, like the Inkpens, had moved on. As mentioned, I did find Paul Stirling when I visited Eliot College. He was retired but retained an office there. We chatted amiably for an hour. He was interested to know that my current job was being the senior editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*. We joked that all the essay writing I'd done during my time at the university would have been good training for that.

We'd like to have visited Peggy Hayes but were advised against it because she'd become reclusive. She'd been widowed and was alienated from her only daughter, who was now schizophrenic. Her husband, John, who'd died in 1980, had been the head of the history department at Canterbury Christ Church College (the local Anglican teachers' college, now the Canterbury Christ Church University). Peggy died in 2011. Before her death she instituted the annual 'John and Peggy Hayes Canterbury Award' at Christ Church. It goes to the individual or organisation producing the best publication on Canterbury history.

As I remarked earlier, making our lives in Canterbury would have been an attractive alternative to uprooting ourselves once again to move to Canberra. Canberra, however, was where our destinies lay. As I hope succeeding chapters will demonstrate, that was where our life's best work would be done — Margaret's as a highly effective school principal and senior educational administrator, mine as a practising historian.

11. AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Canberra became our home in early February 1975. We moved there so that I could take up my PhD scholarship at the Australian National University (ANU). We didn't know it then, but we would live here for the rest of our lives. We imagined that we would remain here for the three years I might take to complete my PhD program, after which we'd depart to wherever my academic career might take me next.

Things didn't exactly work out according to plan, however; and so we're still here almost 49 years later. In those years we became thoroughly 'Canberrified', denizens of Australia's national capital who love the city because of its bushland setting, access to nearby mountains, rivers, lakes and nature parks. (In what other capital city in the world can we be among kangaroos within a five-minute walk from home?) We especially appreciate Canberra's national institutions. As well as the Commonwealth parliament and ANU, they include the National Gallery, the National Library, the National Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Archives, the Australian War Memorial, the National Botanic Gardens, the Museum of Australian Democracy, Questacon (science education museum), the Australian Institute of Sport, the Royal Australian Mint and the High Court of Australia.

For me as an historian, the National Library, National Archives and the Australian War Memorial research centre are vital. Between them, these great repositories house nearly all the records I'm ever likely to wish to consult in researching the books I write. I couldn't be the historian I've become if I lived anywhere else. At the same time, Canberra provided Margaret with the career development opportunities that enabled her to become the principal of a major primary school and then a senior administrator in 'head office'.

Readjusting to life in Australia

After arriving back in Melbourne from London on 2 January 1975, we spent a month there catching up with family and friends. We divided our time between our parents' homes in Brighton, but also spent a week in Creswick. In addition, Margaret and I drove to Canberra for several days so that I could enrol at ANU and make arrangements for our accommodation.

Getting to know Australia again required some adjustments. We'd been living overseas for the past ten years, and although we'd returned to Melbourne annually on leave, Australia had changed.

Social change in Australia had accelerated in the two years we'd been away. Driven by the reformist Whitlam government, rapid change and innovation were now the *zeitgeist*. Military conscription, the National Service scheme, had ended. The last Australian troops had been brought back from Vietnam, ending a decade of major controversy and division. Papua New Guinea had achieved self-government and was on-track for full independence later in 1975. A Department of Aboriginal Affairs had been established and was making ready to legislate for land rights. 'Medibank', precursor to 'Medicare', the national health-care scheme, was being introduced. The first federal legislation on human rights, heritage and the environment had been enacted. The Family Law Act, with its 'no-fault' divorce, had replaced adversarial divorce law. New national institutions were proliferating. They included the Australian Legal Aid Office, the National Film and Television School, the Australian Development Assistance Agency, the Prices Justification Tribunal, the Trade Practices Commission, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Law Reform Commission, the Australian Film Commission, the Australia Council, the Australian Heritage Commission, the Schools Commission and the Technical and Further Education Commission. Tariff barriers were being demolished, making imports cheaper but also

dealing a hefty blow to local manufacturing industry. The range and pace of change was bewildering.

But we, too, had changed. We were no longer the callow naïfs who'd left Warrambeen for PNG ten years earlier. We fancied that we'd meanwhile become world-travelling sophisticates. We deluded ourselves, though we had certainly lived fully in our years in PNG and England. If nothing else, we'd acquired life experience that never would have been ours if we'd remained classroom teachers in Victoria.

We embraced the Whitlamesque reforms enthusiastically. They promised us the brave new world of the 'progressive' Australia that we'd longed for back in the 1950s and early 60s. The Australia we remembered from those years had seemed stultifyingly parochial in its somnolescence.

Some aspects of life in Australia, however, remained aggravatingly the same. For me, these included the national flag. This was (and still is) the blue ensign, displaying a large white seven-point 'Federation' star and the Southern Cross constellation on a dark blue field. Annoyingly for nationalists, especially those who, like me, inclined to republicanism, it also includes the UK's Union Jack in its top left quarter. I've always been mildly affronted by the thought that our most potent national emblem should include that of another nation state. Having just lived in England for 16 months, I'd learnt that the British had little affection for Australia and Australians. The Brits had gladly entered the European Union, shaking themselves free of the shackles represented by us colonials. "Most of them couldn't care less about us," I think whenever I see it; "so why should we retain their flag on ours?"

One disconcerting aspect of being back in Australia was the casualness of Australians in their public dealings. After the politeness and helpfulness of office and shop staff in England, being reminded of Australian manners came as a shock. I realised how affronting they could be several days after arriving back in Melbourne. I'd borrowed my mother-in-law's VW 'beetle' to run a few errands. My first stop was an automotive parts store for a windscreen-wiper blade. As I stepped up to the counter, the chap slouched on the other side glanced sideways at me. "Yeah, mate?" he asked with practised insolence. Biting my tongue, I said I wanted a VW windscreen-wiper blade. What I felt like saying was, "First, you're not my mate; and, second, if you wish to make a sale you'll treat your customers with much more respect and politeness!" Thinking about this minor incident over the years, I realise that, trivial though it was, it epitomised why elsewhere in the world Australians are often regarded as uncouth oafs.

Soaring inflation also came as a surprise. On our last sojourn in Melbourne, the summer of 1972–1973, petrol had cost 40¢ a gallon (9¢ a litre); it now cost $2.54 a gallon) (57¢ a litre). Back then I could fill the VW tank for less than $5, but now a full tank cost more than $31. In the intervening two years, the Consumer Price Index (CPI: a measure of household expenditure) had risen from 7 to 16, i.e. by 128.5%. House prices also startled us. We'd never entered the housing market, but we knew that in the early 70s we could have bought a good-quality three-bedroom house in a middle-class Melbourne suburb for $18,000. By 1975 the same house would cost $32,000.

Settling into Canberra

Margaret was the first to arrive in Canberra. She was due to begin work as an Infants class teacher at Fisher Primary School in early February. Fisher, in the suburb of the same name, had opened a year earlier. The suburb, which had been developed during the early 1970s, is in the Weston Creek area in Canberra's southside — south of Lake Burley Griffin and the Molonglo. (As the Harbour in Sydney and the Yarra in Melbourne do, Canberra has a

topographical north-south divide.) Margaret flew up from Melbourne a day ahead of us, collected the keys to our ANU apartment at 53 Carroll Street, Hughes (two suburbs north of Fisher in the Woden Valley area), and took up residence.

The children and I followed the next day. We drove up the Hume Highway in the second-hand 'Renault' (a dreadful lemon which we soon changed for a Holden 'Torana') I'd bought from a dealer in Moorabbin the previous week. It was a long, tiring 12-hour trip. In those days the highway ran through all the towns *en route*, with no sections of divided highway let alone the freeway which it has meanwhile become. We arrived utterly exhausted about 7.00 p.m. that night.

Margaret started work the next day. We drove her to the Fisher school the next morning then collected her again after school that afternoon. Tony and Katie started at Fisher the next day, Tony in Grade 4 and Katie in Grade 1. We placed them there rather than at the nearby Hughes Primary School because that was more convenient and made the school run simpler. Rosie, however, went into Form 1 (Grade 7) at Deakin High School, about a mile from our unit in Hughes, because it was the nearest secondary school and had a good reputation.

The two-storey Carroll Street unit was small and cramped but adequate. On the upper floor it had three bedrooms and a bathroom. Downstairs was a kitchen, living room, laundry and hallway. The front door, which we rarely used, faced a broad strip of grassed open space between our row of units and the next row to the south.

When we occupied the Carroll Street apartment, we guessed we'd be living there for the next three years, until I finished my PhD. After that, we'd go wherever my next job took me, hopefully to some university eager to employ a keen and versatile, youngish historian who was also a good teacher. I recall that the rent was only $18 a week. My ANU scholarship paid me a tax-free living allowance of $8,000 a year, while Margaret was earning about $12,000 as a three-year trained 'Band 1' teacher. (Band 1, ordinary classroom teacher, was the lowest promotional grade. Band 2 was the senior teacher grade, in charge of a teaching department; Band 3 was the deputy principal level; and the principals were Band 4.) With low rent like that, we thought we'd be in clover. After only a month, however, ANU introduced 'economic rental', i.e. raised the rent to the level of the commercial rental market — $45 a week for 53 Carroll Street.

At that rate we'd be better off buying a house and paying a mortgage. I made inquiries about houses for sale from the local real estate agent in the Hughes shopping area only 200 metres from our unit. I told him I was interested in buying a 3- or 4-bedroom 'ex-guvvy' house, which in Canberra jargon meant a former government-owned house on a public housing estate. He said he didn't have an ex-guvvy at present but for $27,000 could build me a 4-bedroom 'Monad' house at 98 Namatjira Drive, Stirling, a new suburb adjacent to Fisher and only 600 metres from Margaret's school. 'Monad' was a Canberra building firm whose specialty was an 'Australian colonial'-style bungalow with a veranda extending all the way along the front side of the house. The land would cost $5,000 and the house $22,000.

And so we bought our first home. We've only ever owned two others — our present family home at 49 Gaunson Crescent, which we've now lived in for 44 years, and a holiday house in Diggings Road, Tawonga, in the Kiewa Valley of north-eastern Victoria, which we joyfully owned and periodically occupied for 17 years 1994–2011.

To finance the Namatjira Drive house, we sold a suburban building block we'd bought in Farm Road, Cheltenham (several suburbs south-east of Brighton), as an investment several years earlier. We also obtained a $15,000 government housing loan provided to first home buyers in Canberra, as well as securing a Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) mortgage for the balance. The loan repayments would be $45 a week directly debited from our CBA savings account. The benefit of buying into the Canberra property market would be that at the

end of my PhD program we'd have a part-owned asset, whereas if we'd remained ANU tenants we'd have had nothing to show for the $7,000 we'd have paid in rent.

As soon as the finance was finalised, by about April 1975, Monad got to work. They took seven months to complete the job. We moved into our Namatjira Drive home in early November. We soon got to know our new next-door neighbours, Andrew and Chris Parker at number 96 and Alan and Carol McKendry at number 100. The Parkers had two daughters the same ages as Tony and Katie; the McKendrys had three boys, the older two of similar age to Tony and Katie and the youngest a toddler.

We worked hard at setting up our new house to make it a comfortable home. While Margaret toiled inside to sew and hang curtains, I laboured outside to plant lawns, establish gardens and plant trees. We were reasonably happy there. The house was near the Fisher school and local shopping centres. The bus stops were only several doors away. Margaret quickly proved she was one of the best teachers on the Fisher staff, became career ambitious, and began seeking promotion, which she gained after only two years. (At the beginning of 1977 she went to Mawson Primary School as the Band 2 teacher in charge of the separate Junior School, i.e. Beginners and Grades 1 and 2.)

The children seemed to make friends and settle into their new schools quickly; but the appearances were deceptive. Decades later, Rosie told us that she'd been severely bullied at Deakin High School. She was a year younger than many of her classmates; she'd never been to school in Australia; she wasn't attuned to Australian youth culture; and was a 'bookworm' — a 'dag' in contemporary school parlance — rather than 'sporty'. She was actually what's now called a 'third culture kid', a phenomenon of the colonial world and/or the expatriate experience. Third culture kids don't really belong to their parents' culture; nor do they belong to the alien culture of the country in which they've been raised. Such children often experience adjustment problems when resettled in their parents' society. We were appalled to learn of Rosie's bullying and aghast that we hadn't noticed anything amiss at the time. Fortunately, one excellent outcome of Rosie's four years at Deakin was her enduring friendship with Donna Cifali. Donna was even more exotic than Rosie: her father, Guido Cifali, is a Sicilian-born geologist, and her mother, Maya, is part-French and part-Jewish from cosmopolitan Alexandria in Egypt.

As things turned out, we lived in the Namatjira Drive house for little more than three years. We moved into our new Wanniassa home in September 1979. Our reasons for changing houses so soon were various. The children were bigger and needed more space. Namatjira Drive, the main route for traffic between the Weston Creek and Tuggeranong regions, was becoming ever busier. And one of our neighbours was proving difficult: he'd stopped talking to us and wouldn't let his children play with ours.

By the time we moved to Wanniassa we'd come to regard ourselves as Canberrans. Melbourne was where our parents lived; and most years we drove down there three or four times to visit them. They and our siblings also visited us in Canberra. We always greatly enjoyed our time back in our old hometown, but with each passing year we identified more strongly with our adopted city. In time a whole generation of our family, our grandchildren's, would be Canberrans born-and-bred rather than blow-ins like us.

An ANU research scholar

Several days after arriving in Canberra, I began my career as an ANU 'research scholar'. This, I soon discovered, was what PhD students on ANU scholarships were called. My first duty was to introduce myself in the department where I'd be based. I'd been assigned to the department of Pacific & South-East Asian History (Pac&SEAHistory for short) in the Research School of Pacific Studies, or 'RSPacS' as it was more familiarly known. Both the

department and the school were located in the Coombs Building, one of the most distinctive buildings on the ANU campus. Co-located in the Coombs with RSPacS was RSSS — the Research School of Social Sciences, which had its own history department entirely separate from Pac&SEAHistory. Both of these history departments were postgraduate research units, which meant that they focussed on research and enjoyed the luxury of not having to teach undergraduates. Adding to the inherent confusion of two distinct history departments within Coombs was ANU's *third* history department. This was the undergraduate one at the other end of the campus in the Research School of General Studies, which had students taking History for BA degrees as well as postgraduate students working towards MAs and PhDs.

The Coombs, which opened in 1964, is of eccentric design. It comprises a series of three 3-storey modules, each hexagonal with an open courtyard at the centre. The hexagons intersect so that one of the six sides of one hexagon is also one of six sides of the next. Finding the Coombs was easy enough because its front entrance faces the main door of the Menzies Library, the large postgraduate library on the southern side of the campus. (The other main library, the Chifley, used mainly by undergraduates, was at the opposite, northern, end.)

Finding Pac&SEAHistory was not so easy, however, because (as one history of ANU has described it) the 'infamous' Coombs is 'notoriously difficult to navigate'. Maps along the corridors and beside each of the stairwells were misleading and sometimes absent. You could walk completely round all three hexagons, which were so labyrinthine that this might take you a quarter of an hour, but you might still not find the right room. You'd then return to the reception desk inside the main entrance, where you'd be told that the office you were seeking was on a floor below the one you'd just walked round. After some trial and error, I found that the easiest way to get to the department was to march past reception, enter and cross the courtyard behind the main entrance, then go through the nearest ground-floor door, climb three flights of stairs to the middle level then turn sharp right. That would bring me out near Pac&SEAHistory's small library and photocopying room. Continuing south-east along the corridor, I'd come to the adjacent departmental head's and secretary's offices.

Other doors along either side of the corridors opened into the offices of the Fellows (generally well-established practising historians), several research assistants and secretarial assistants, and — lowest in this hierarchy — the research scholars. The research scholars had their own pecking order. At the top were those who'd been in the department for three or four years and were finalising their theses before submitting them. Further down the heap were those who'd returned from field work in distant places — Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, the Solomons, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Malaysia or Indonesia — and were writing up the chapters of their theses. At the bottom were the newcomers, who, like me, were working out what their thesis topics would be, undertaking preliminary library research and were planning their field research. I accordingly joined the lowest of the low — a group of newcomers who still had to prove their mettle.

In 1975 the department took in five new research scholars. Apart from me there was Paki Neves, David Lewis, Judy Bennett and Michael Moynagh. Paki was a white chap from Hawaii who was interested in Polynesian historical linguistics. David was a former teachers' college lecturer from PNG who wished to write about plantation owners in Papua. Judy, the only woman among us and another former PNG teachers' college lecturer, planned to study the impact of trade and plantations on Solomon Islands village communities. Michael was an English chap who'd just arrived in Australia and had little idea of Pacific cultures and geography. After discovering that 'Pacific History' was too big a topic for a PhD, he wrote a history of the Fiji sugar industry instead. Paki dropped out after a year; David took an astounding 14 years to submit his thesis; Michael took three years and Judy four to complete

theirs. I surprised everyone, myself included, by finishing mine in two years and three months, a departmental record.

We were a productive cohort of research scholars because we four who graduated, even David, eventually reworked our theses and published them as books. David's book was *The plantation dream: Developing British New Guinea and Papua, 1884–1942* (1996); Michael's was *Brown or White? A history of the Fiji sugar industry, 1873–1973* (1981); Judy's was *Wealth of the Solomons: A history of a Pacific archipelago, 1800-1978* (1987). Mine was *A thousand graduates: Conflict in university development in Papua New Guinea, 1961–1976* (1980), but more of that later.

Pac&SEAHistory was an oddly arcane department. Because it was in an ANU research school, it did no teaching and had no students apart from us research scholars beavering away on our PhD theses. It occasionally conducted seminars, a couple of times a year at most, usually when someone decided to deliver a paper on their current research or invited some outside speaker. I was never asked to present a paper, and I didn't offer, so I completed my doctoral program without most members of the department knowing what my thesis was about. Nor did the members of the department socialise. Very occasionally, maybe once a year, there'd be an afternoon tea in the library-photocopying room, but that was all. Some of us attended morning tea in the Coombs common room, where we might meet members of other RSPacS and RSSS departments. I enjoyed the Coombs morning teas but didn't often attend them because I was usually too busy in the Menzies Library.

Readers won't accordingly be surprised to know that, with two exceptions, I made no long-term friends in my 27 months as a Pac&SEAHistory research scholar. The first exception was Hank Nelson, whom I'd known when I was a MA student at UPNG. Hank and I renewed our friendship and remained good mates until his death from melanoma 11 years ago. The other was the departmental head and Professor of Pacific History, Gavan Daws.

Gavan, four years older than Hank and me, had grown up in Dimboola in Victoria's Wimmera District, where his father was the principal of the local high school. Like us, he became a government-sector teacher after graduating from Melbourne University. He'd taught at Box Hill High School before moving to Honolulu in 1958 to undertake an MA and then a PhD degree in Hawaiian history at the University of Hawaii. In time he became the great historian of the Hawaiian islands, but he returned to Australia in 1974 to take up the chair in Pacific History at ANU. He held the position for the next 15 years until, tiring of academia, he returned to Honolulu to become a filmmaker and freelance writer. Both Hank and Gavan remained mentors of mine and critically commented on the manuscripts of various books I've written.

A PhD topic, a thesis, an examination and a graduation ceremony

The first person I got to know in Pac&SEAHistory was Robyn Walker, the bossy departmental secretary, a young woman in her mid-late twenties, a former RAAF officer, who shepherded us research scholars as she might a class of naughty wayward schoolchildren on an outing. She introduced me to Gavan Daws, who welcomed me and told me that my supervisor would be Professor Oskar Hermann Khristian Spate (1911–2000), an eminent historical geographer known professionally as O.H.K. Spate. Oskar had been appointed as RSPacS's foundation Professor of Geography in 1951. He subsequently served as the RSPacS director 1967–1972 before joining Pac&SEAHistory as a Professorial Fellow in 1973 to research and write *The Spanish Lake: The Pacific Since Magellan* (1979–1989), a monumental three-volume history of the Pacific. The reason Oskar would be my supervisor was that my proposed topic was 'The role of the universities in elite formation in PNG'. Oskar had been a member of the commission of inquiry which in 1964 had recommended

that the Australian government should establish a university in PNG, so he presumably knew something about the subject.

After speaking with Gavan, I crossed the corridor and knocked on Oskar's door. He looked up from between piles of books as I entered and asked who I was and what I wanted. I explained that I'd joined the department as a research scholar to write a thesis about the PNG universities and had just been told that he'd supervise my project. He seemed rather pleased to think that he'd been entrusted with the guidance of another postgraduate student, who'd probably be the last of many he'd supervised during a 38-year academic career. He invited me to sit down and tell him about myself. I briefly explained my recent background as a postgraduate student in Sociology and PNG History and my experience in lecturing at the PNG University of Technology. He suggested that as my topic was on the borderline of Sociology and History, I should find a specialist in Educational Sociology to co-supervise me. When I'd found one, I should return to discuss my project further.

Within the next few days I located an educational sociologist in the RSSS Sociology department. He was an amiable chap, like me a Melbourne High School Old Boy but about ten years older than me. He was mildly interested in my topic but knew nothing about PNG, so he doubted he'd be of much use to me.

Meanwhile, I'd begun research in the Menzies Library by looking through the successive annual reports to the UN Trusteeship Council of the PNG Administration to see what information they had on the gestation and development of PNG's higher education system. I also began searching the *Hansards* of the Commonwealth and PNG parliaments to find what snippets of information they might contain.

This research led me to the former Department of External Territories, near ANU in Hobart Place, a 10-minute walk from the office in Coombs that I shared with Judy Bennett. The department had recently been rebadged as 'ADAB' — the Australian Development Assistance Bureau — but it still held the External Territories files on PNG, including those on higher education and university development. Hank Nelson told me that Ian Downs (1915–2004), a prominent one-time PNG *kiap* (patrol officer), district commissioner, elected member of the PNG Legislative Council, coffee planter and writer, had been given the job of producing an official history of Australian UN Trusteeship in New Guinea. He had an office in the ADAB building in Hobart Place and might just let me see some files if I asked him nicely.

I duly wrote a flattering, pleading letter to Ian Downs, saying I knew much about him through having lived in Wewak and Lae for nine years. Laying it on thick, I said I'd always admired him and his writing, including his 1972 apocalyptic novel about PNG, *The Stolen Land*. I then explained that I'd recently come to ANU to research and write a PhD thesis on the development of the PNG university system. Would he be able to assist me with advice about sources?

It so happened that the day Ian received my letter he'd begun wondering how he might deal with higher education in his book. Apart from being aware that PNG now had universities, he knew little about them. He accordingly rang me to ask if I'd drop by his office the next day to discuss my project.

We instantly warmed to each other. We found we had much in common. Even though he was Scottish by birth, he'd lived in Brighton as a boy, in 'St Ninian's', a historic beachside house at the bottom end of Bay Street that I knew well. (Built in 1841, it had only just been demolished.) As a young *kiap* Ian had done his best work in the Morobe District before World War II. His patrol post had been at Tungu on the Watut River, from where he'd patrolled far and wide in the Watut and Markham Valleys and in the mighty mountains hemming them in to the north and south. During the war he'd worked for the Allied Intelligence Bureau behind enemy lines for several months in 1942, locating possible sites for

an Allied amphibious assault on Lae. On one occasion he'd narrowly escaped a Japanese ambush after being betrayed in a coastal village he was visiting.

Having heard me outline my project, Ian made me an offer I couldn't refuse. "You can read whatever External Territories education files you like," he promised, "and in return you can produce me a summary of what happened in PNG higher education up till self-government in 1973, because I know little about that subject." I started work the next day, assisted by his research officer, an obliging middle-aged lady called Eileen Ryan, a very experienced public servant who provided me with lists of file titles then brought me whatever files I requested. There was also a young female typist, Jacki Hodge, who, when she wasn't typing chapter drafts for Ian, photocopied whatever material I wanted.

I worked in Ian's office for up to eight hours daily for the next three or four months. In that time I viewed just about every External Territories file on the development of the PNG universities. I soon realised that with such priceless primary source material at my disposal, documents that wouldn't become archivally accessible to the public for another 30 years, I'd be wasting a heaven-sent opportunity by fretting over the sociological niceties of elite development. What I must write about instead was the short history of the PNG university system, which dated back only to about 1961. That was when, under pressure from the UN Trusteeship Council, the Australian government and the PNG administration began realising they must quickly do something constructive about higher education in PNG. The history I'd write would run through to 1976 in the months following the formal granting of PNG independence, due in September 1975, only about seven months away.

After my productive time with Ian, Eileen and Jacki at ADAB, I went back to Oskar Spate for another conversation about my project. "Now you know what you wish to write about and are familiar with your topic, this is what you must do," he said. "Go away, think of a title for your thesis and then compile a list of ten chapter headings. Come back in a week and show me the results." A week later I returned with my list. "Good," Oskar remarked; "now you must write a paragraph summarising the content of each chapter. Show me that in a week's time." I sweated over this next task, thinking through the events and issues each chapter would discuss and then distilling these into a series of one-paragraph chapter summaries. The next week I showed Oskar the results. "Very good! You now have a well-constructed chronologically-ordered chapter plan. It covers all the themes you must discuss, so you can start drafting your chapters," he responded. "You needn't come back until you have a thesis manuscript for me to read."

I was far from ready to start writing chapters, however. I wouldn't reach that stage of my project for another year and a half. Before then I wished to interview and correspond with many of the key players; and I wished to undertake archival research at both the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) and the PNG University of Technology (Unitech). All of that would take another 18 months, much of which would be spent at UPNG in Port Moresby and at Unitech in Lae.

Those I interviewed included Sir Paul Hasluck, the long-serving Minister for Territories who in February 1964 had appointed the Commission on Higher Education in Papua and New Guinea. It was the report of this three-member commission, one of whom was Oskar Spate, that provided the blueprint for PNG's university development. I also interviewed Sir George Currie, the Scottish-born commission chairman, a long-serving university vice-chancellor in Western Australia and New Zealand; and Sir John Gunther, the foundation UPNG vice-chancellor and, with Currie & Spate, the third member of the commission. To interview Gunther, I spent two full days as his guest at his home at Buderim on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

Apart from them, my interviewees included Ken Inglis, who'd succeeded Gunther as UPNG vice-chancellor; Sir Louis Matheson, inaugural vice-chancellor at Monash University

and the chair of the Unitech council; I corresponded with Eric Duncanson, inaugural director of the PNG Institute of Technology (later Unitech), who'd retired to England, and I interviewed his successor, John Sandover. I also interviewed Arthur O'Neill, the long-serving UPNG registrar, who gave me access to the UPNG archives. As well as them, I interviewed and/or corresponded with many dozens of the other educational administrators, academics, senior civil servants and politicians involved in creating, setting directions for, and managing PNG's emergent university system.

I also spent seven months on two separate field trips to PNG to undertake archival research and conduct interviews at UPNG and Unitech during 1976. Before these trips, I'd spent a week in Lae at Unitech so I could witness the Independence festivities on 16 September 1975, a day I'd often wondered if I'd ever see. These excursions also enabled me to renew friendships with various acquaintances and colleagues in Lae and Port Moresby. Among them was Lunga, our former houseboy, who returned to work for me during the six or eight weeks I spent in Lae. While on the Unitech campus during 1976, I was allowed to live in our old house on Ramu Drive, so for Lunga and me it was almost like old times again. During my months at UPNG I lived in the hostel of the ANU's New Guinea Research Unit, which had a small compound of its own adjacent to the UPNG campus at Waigani.

Back in Canberra again by December 1976, I faced the daunting prospect of turning a filing cabinet full of notes, records of interviews, journal articles, copies of chapters from books, newspaper clippings and photocopied archival material into a 100,000-word PhD thesis. The task turned out not to be as formidable as I'd feared. Oskar Spate's wise advice was timely. He suggested that unless I'd discovered vitally new information during my interviews and among the university archives in PNG, I should draft my chapters in strict accordance with the chapter plan I'd prepared 18 months earlier. I should follow the plan closely. That in turn meant resisting the temptation to dive down rabbit holes and fly off at tangents pursuing interesting but largely irrelevant side issues.

After a few weeks out for enjoying Christmas and reconnecting with my family, I began drafting my chapters. I'd already decided on a thesis title: 'A thousand graduates: Conflict in university development in Papua New Guinea, 1961–1976'. The main title was a quote from the 1964 Currie commission report on higher education in PNG. That was the number of university graduates which the commissioners estimated PNG would require by Independence to make a smooth transition from colonial status to independent nationhood. (The universities easily exceeded that quota.) I chose the subtitle because the more I researched the more I realised the aptness of an expression that a commentator coined for the universities in Nigeria. He wrote that they were like 'baskets of crabs' — seething with conflict as they struggled to secure the resources they required to fulfil their responsibilities. The PNG universities were riven with internal divisions: as well as inter-departmental rivalries and disputes between academic, technical and administrative staff, they had to manage student protests, which often turned violent. They contended with each other, and they fought the governments that funded them and the government educational agencies seeking to coordinate them. These conflicts would be major themes the thesis must examine.

I mainly wrote my chapters at home rather than in my office at ANU, where the Coombs Building held too many distractions. My former roommate, Judy Bennett was away from ANU long-term conducting her research in the Solomons. Instead I now had two new roommates, both of whom I'd known at UPNG years earlier — John Waiko and Diane Langmore. John's 1982 thesis was on his own Binandere people of northern Papua. He became the first Papua New Guinean to earn a PhD in History, the first to publish a general history of PNG, and in 1986 the first to be appointed as the UPNG Professor of History. He later entered parliament and became Minister for Foreign Affairs. Diane, who like Margaret and me was from Brighton, had tutored in History at UPNG. Her MA at UPNG, on James

Chalmers, a martyred Scottish missionary in Papua, was the next awarded after mine in 1973. It was published the next year by Melbourne University Press at much the same time as my first book, *Lae: Village and City*. Diane's 1981 thesis, on European missionaries in Papua before World War I, was published in 1989 by University of Hawaii Press. After graduating, Diane joined the staff of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, which was an RSSS department and located in the Coombs. In 2004 she became the ADB Editor, the first woman to hold the position.

My chapter-drafting proceeded expeditiously. Within three months, by about mid-April 1977, I'd produced a ten-chapter cleanly-typed manuscript, as planned, replete with introductory pages, bibliography and four appendices. Oskar then took about a week to complete his review. He suggested a few minor amendments, then told me that after I'd made these changes I should have the thesis typed up, bound and submitted. The amendments might have taken me a couple of hours; I then passed my manuscript to Rosamund Walsh, a secretary in Pac&SEAHistory who undertook professional thesis-typing as a sideline. She took a couple of weeks to produce the final 483-page draft.

I then took Rosamund's handiwork to Adriatic Bookbinders in Fyshwick, a firm that specialised in printing and binding ANU theses. Adriatic probably took a fortnight to print and bind six copies of the thesis. I kept one, gave another to the Pac&SEAHistory library and lodged the other four with the ANU academic registrar. Three of these would go to my examiners and the fourth was for the thesis collection of the Menzies Library.

By this stage, late May 1977, I was in my next job, teaching Geography and Remedial English at Dickson College. Dickson, in an inner northern Canberra suburb of the same name, was one of Canberra's new government-sector secondary colleges, which taught only Years 11 and 12. My ANU scholarship and living allowance ended the day I submitted my thesis. With a family to help support, I'd taken the first job I could secure; and the easiest job to find was the one I'd given up before my arrival at ANU — secondary teaching. I'll write about my seven years at Dickson in the next chapter, but before then I'll discuss other important events during my time at ANU.

My examiners were Professors Robin ('Bob') Gollan, Charles Rowley and Donald Denoon, all of whom were admired historian friends of mine. They took about three months on their task. Eventually, maybe late August 1977, I was summoned to an oral examination, the *viva voce*, in an office on the ANU campus. I forget whose it was and where. Only Bob and Charles were present because Donald, the external examiner, was still in Port Moresby, where he was UPNG's Professor of History. (He'd succeeded Ken Inglis there; he later succeeded Gavan Daws in Pac&SEAHistory.) Donald had sent a set of questions. Bob, who chaired the meeting, started by congratulating me on my achievement. He said he and Charles thought I'd produced a first-rate thesis, which they'd agreed they would pass without further questions; however, Donald had questions he wished me to answer. I can't remember what these were, but I might have spent 15 to 20 minutes answering them. When I'd finished, Bob and Charles looked at each other and nodded in agreement. They thought I'd answered well. Bob said the examiners' unanimous recommendation would be that my thesis be passed and I be awarded the degree. Before departing, we chatted a little about what I was currently doing and what my future plans were. I said I'd try to find a university lecturing position somewhere and try to publish the thesis. Meanwhile, I had a secure, well-paying Canberra job as a senior secondary teacher.

One aspect of my examination pleased me greatly. I'd achieved a goal I'd set myself years earlier. This was to obtain a PhD by the time I was 40. By this stage I was 39 and only four months away from my 40th birthday. By the time the degree was conferred I'd turned 40, but according to ANU I'd completed the degree program while I was still 39.

I received the degree certificate on Friday 28 April 1978 at that year's autumn conferral ceremony, held in the Canberra School of Music auditorium, Llewellyn Hall, venue for ANU graduations. The guest speaker was Sir Leslie Melville (1902–2002), a distinguished economist and former ANU vice-chancellor. He'd been the adviser to the Department of External Territories on funding levels for the PNG universities, in which capacity I'd met him about six years earlier at Unitech. I'd subsequently interviewed him during my research for my thesis. Perhaps a dozen of us received our PhD certificates that day from the ANU Chancellor, Sir John Crawford (1910–1984), who'd presented me with my MA certificate at UPNG five years earlier. The only graduand I recognised was Elspeth Young (1940–2002), a Scottish geographer whom I'd known slightly when we were both MA students at UPNG. She'd also conducted her PhD field research in PNG at the same time I was undertaking mine, and our paths had crossed briefly then.

The conferral ceremony was a grand family occasion. Mum and Dad caught the bus up from Melbourne to be with us; and Margaret, the children and I all took the day off from school to be able to attend. It was such a warm autumn day that I dressed in lightweight summer slacks, shirt and tie, without a jacket. (I didn't own a suit at that stage; indeed I hadn't worn one in ten years. I bought my next suit five years later for the launch of my first book on St John Ambulance and the Order of St John.) The morning ceremony was followed by refreshments for the graduates and their families and friends in the reception area of Melville Hall, one of ANU's central administrative buildings. That afternoon the Willis clan went bush for a picnic. Exploring new bush locales was always a favourite activity during my parents' annual visits to stay with us in Canberra. I forget exactly where we went on this occasion, but perhaps we had our picnic in a clearing beside the Boboyan Road in the Namadgi National Park about 50 kilometres south of Canberra.

How good a thesis was it?

Those who read 'A Thousand Graduates' seemed to think it was an excellent thesis. When revised and published in ANU's Pacific Research Monograph series in 1980, it reviewed extraordinarily well in various journals and the 'Higher Education' supplements of several newspapers.

The published version had only a small print run of about 500 copies, which retailed for a surprisingly low $8, the equivalent of about $36 in current values. (At that price, ANU could barely have recovered costs.) The book sold out within a few months. The ANU print room produced two further impressions over the next 18 months or so, and these, too, soon sold out. Nowadays used copies are available from the online book trade for between $50 and $60.

The most positive feedback the published book received came 32 years later, in 2012, when I received an email form the UPNG Librarian advising me that UPNG Press wished to reprint *A Thousand Graduates*. He said that the UPNG Chancellor, Stephen P. Pokawin, a one-time senior lecturer in Law at UPNG and more recently the premier and governor of Manus (his home province), had come across the book in the Library. He'd never heard of it before but was so impressed he wanted the current academic and administrative staff to read it. Would I agree to a reprint; and what stipulations might I impose? "Delighted!" I replied, "Reprint as often as you like; and my only stipulation is that my name should continue appearing on the front cover and title page."

The Chancellor himself provided a warmly affirming Foreword to the reprint. Among other observations, he wrote that:

> *A Thousand Graduates* is a rare document that talks about the teething problems, the intriguing manoeuvres, and the trail-blazing experiences of the two public universities of PNG…. *A Thousand Graduates* is hardly mentioned by commentators and historians of universities in PNG. Yet it is perhaps the best researched book on the first ten years of UPNG and UOT [Unitech] to date…. I hope this book…will find [its] way to our educational institutions at all levels. Our future generations need to know what happened yesterday and learn from its experience in order to chart the course for the future.

Thank you, Stephen P. Pokawin, for helping ensure that my PhD thesis didn't entirely disappear without trace!

While I've been writing this chapter, I've also reread sections of the thesis, something I haven't done in many years. Seeing it with fresh eyes enables me to appreciate it. I'd forgotten most of the incidents and events that it summarises, but I can see that it's meticulously researched, well-structured, well-argued and well-written. Though it was produced 45 years ago, in another age now, I'm retrospectively pleased with it. I remain grateful to Oskar Spate and my three examiners for helping ensure that it crossed the finishing line.

The benefits of being Ian Willis PhD

Until the novelty wore off, I felt immensely proud about being Dr Ian Willis PhD rather than simply Mr Ian Willis MA. I was delighted to have hauled myself up to the scholastic achievement level of Unitech colleagues such as Dr Graham McLean, Dr Hector Clark, Drs David and Mary Dale, Dr Steve Seumahu, Dr Eric Duncanson and Dr John Sandover. Knowing I'd clambered where UPNG historians like Dr Hank Nelson, Dr Bill Gammage, Dr Peter Bolger and Dr Sione Latukefu had previously climbed was most satisfying. I'd also proved my academic mettle like my Brandi High School pals Dr Paul Somerville and Dr Pieter Degeling and one-time school chums Dr Mark Richmond, Dr Jim Gribble and Dr Alan Gregory.

But what kind of accomplishment was the earning of a PhD? What had I achieved through completing one? I had become no wiser, more intelligent, more cultured or more sophisticated. Nor had my PhD transformed me into what I've never been — an intellectual like, say, Ken Inglis, Gavan Daws, Oskar Spate, Donald Denoon and Jim and Helga Griffin (two of my much-admired UPNG historian friends) so eminently are/were.

Part of the answer is that I'd demonstrated something worthwhile about myself. Someone once said that what a PhD indicates about the person who has successfully completed one is only that he/she can do a PhD. Not everyone can, however; and many who start do not finish. A PhD is not so much a pointer to high intelligence or profound learning as to scholastic stamina. Those who have earnt a PhD have shown they have the patience to persevere and the capacity for applying themselves obsessively to the one task intensely for several years on end.

A second benefit was that the PhD experience had instilled in me habits of thinking systematically and analysing problems rationally. Neither of these habits came to me naturally, but I developed them through researching and writing university theses. My friend Gordon Holden reminded me of this point when he described his own experience of earning a PhD: 'My feeling is that mine developed me better into a knowledgeable scholar on my particular subject, who thinks logically and critically and can structure an argument or presentation.'

The third aspect of having become 'Dr' Willis was that I'd taken a major step on my way to becoming a professional historian. The PhD proved that I could handle major

historical research and writing projects. It accordingly meant that henceforth I would be taken more seriously as a professional historian than if my highest qualification was my MA.

Looking back now on my practising historian's career, which really began with my MA preliminary dissertation 54 years ago in 1969, I realise that I was destined to be an historian. Having started writing history with my study of Mick Leahy's and Mick Dwyer's 1930 gold-prospecting expedition across the central ranges of New Guinea from the Markham-Ramu Valley to the Gulf of Papua, I'd released my personal genie, my historian's spirit, from its bottle. Having been set free, the genie would continue leading me from one historical research, writing and publishing project to another, until the end of what is now becoming a long life.

The experience of writing a PhD thesis had also forced me to ponder more deeply what history is, why historians write it, how they go about their work, and what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' historical writing. In short, I'd had to grapple with 'historiography', which the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines as:

> …the writing of history, especially the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particular details from the authentic materials in those sources, and the synthesis of those details into a narrative that stands the test of critical examination. The term historiography also refers to the theory and history of historical writing.

In their final year, all undergraduates majoring in History in a four-year honours degree study a subject variously called 'Theory & Practice of History', 'Historical Methodology' and other like terms for historiography. If they ever go on to a PhD or write a book of history they'll inevitably grapple with historiographical issues. I'd certainly done so while researching and writing my MA and PhD theses; and I do so again every time I research and write another book. Being concerned about historiography is among the professional historian's most essential qualities.

Whatever I'd been previously, and whatever I might subsequently become, the attainment of a PhD was the major turning point in my career. It marked my transition from a teacher interested in history into a practising historian who also took teaching and public service jobs to pay the rent and help support a family.

Perhaps ironically, the experience of PhD studies made me realise that I didn't actually need a PhD, a MA or even any historiographical training at all to be an historian. My formal qualifications demonstrated my serious intent as an historian, but they weren't really necessary for me to have become a proficient practising historian. I have various friends who've become accomplished historians without degrees in History.

In this connection I'll mention just two friends who've written excellent books of history without formal historiographical training. The first is Ian Downs, whose book, *The Australian Trusteeship, Papua New Guinea 1945–1975*, was published by the Australian Government Publishing Service in 1980, the same year the book version of my PhD thesis was released. Ian went on to publish other first-rate books of history before his death at 89 in 2004. Among them was *The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, NGVR, 1939–1943: A History* (1999), which I used in researching and writing my latest book, *Operation Postern: The battle to recapture Lae from the Japanese, 1943* (2023).

The other historian friend was the late Frank Dunstan, an Order of St John confrère who produced the official history of St John Ambulance in the Northern Territory, where St John conducts the Territory-wide ambulance transport service. Frank joined the Navy at 16 then spent the next 11 years on various ships and shore establishments. He became a St John Ambulance volunteer through his experience as a firefighter with Bushfires NT. His book *Awkward hours, awkward jobs: A History of St John Ambulance in the Northern Territory 1915–2012* (2013) is among the very best of many dozens of St John Ambulance and Order of St John histories I've seen. Frank went on to write histories of St John awards and

ceremonies, and of the Order's links with the ancient Knights Hospitaller. Both Ian and Frank learned historiography 'on the job' by researching and writing history; they learned so well that their books are among the best institutional histories I've seen.

Oskar Spate

Despite his very German name, Oskar was English. His father was a restaurant owner from Bavaria who had migrated to London, where he joined the Salvation Army and married an English Salvationist. After World War I the original German surname, Späth, also spelt 'Spaet' and meaning 'late', was anglicised to the nearest-sounding English word. After grammar school in London, Oskar went to St Catherine's College, Cambridge, where he earned a first-class honours degree in both English and Geography in 1933, and then a PhD in 1937. He subsequently taught in universities in Burma (Myanmar), India and London, with war service in between. In 1951 he was appointed foundation Professor of Geography in RSPacS, of which he was later Director. He also served as an adviser to the Australian and British governments on political development in Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

Oskar was a polymath, one of those truly rare people who not only know everything about their own subject but a huge amount about every other one as well. The arts, philosophy, history, politics, linguistics, psychology, economics, the sciences — whatever it was, Oskar knew about it. He didn't flaunt his knowledge, but in any conversation with him it was obvious that he had catholic interests and was immensely learned.

Oskar was a crusty, irascible chap who seemed much older than he was. He was 64 when he became my supervisor but looked at least 20 years older. On some days he appeared so frail I wondered if he'd last long enough to review my thesis manuscript. He actually survived a heart attack during my second year at ANU then lived another 24 years. I began referring to him, in jest and only at home, as 'Old Oscar'. "Old Oscar wants me to produce a thesis chapter summary," I might say to Margaret and the children over dinner; or, "Old Oscar has had a heart attack, so perhaps I'd better visit him."

I had an odd relationship with Oskar. I only ever met him formally as my supervisor on five occasions, which meant about once every five or six months on average and for only about 20 minutes each time. Once when he was working in his office just across the corridor from mine with the door partly open, I had a question for him so I knocked on his door. "Come in," he responded testily. Although we hadn't seen each other in months, he looked up and exclaimed, "Oh no! Not you again!" in exasperation. I apologised for intruding and said I'd come back another day when he wasn't so busy.

Oskar invited Margaret and me to dinner in the house he shared in Turner with Browning, his second wife, a charming, hospitable American woman, a former secondary teacher, who made us very welcome. The evening was a great success. We later invited them to dinner at our new home in Stirling, and that was a happy evening too. Oskar the raconteur shone on such occasions. Apart from those dinners and a couple of morning teas in the Coombs common room, however, we saw little of each other. That suited me fine because I was at ANU to work not socialise.

I suspect that Oskar had a low opinion of me and my abilities, which might explain his impatience with me. At one of our meetings he was dismissive. "You're just a Galashiels Scot!" he remarked. I was astounded, not so much by its being a put-down but by the background knowledge it revealed. Oskar knew nothing of my ancestry, but it so happens that I strongly resemble my Scottish great-grandmother, Margaret Howie (née Pringle), whose ancestry was from the Galashiels-Melrose area. Congratulations, Oskar! Hole in one! Somehow his geographer's sensibilities and knowledge of British physiognomies must have enabled him to guess my probable ancestral locality accurately.

Oskar didn't attend my degree conferral ceremony. I didn't expect him to, but through Gavan Daws he sent me a lame excuse for not being present. At that point I discovered that an ANU tradition is for PhD supervisors to attend their students' graduations. I wasn't hurt by his not extending that courtesy to me. Being realistic, I guessed he couldn't be bothered with me now that I was no longer his responsibility. I made a point of responding formally to his message by writing to him. I thanked him for the supervision he'd provided and for successfully shepherding me through my PhD program.

These sentiments were genuine. I was deeply grateful that Oskar been my supervisor. He was an old hand at that job. He allowed me to get on with researching and writing my thesis without interfering. He had then provided his input at the critical juncture, when I had a finished manuscript that needed his critical comment. In his 40-year career as an academic he must have supervised or examined dozens of PhD theses. He knew what kind of thesis examiners would pass, and he wouldn't let one of his students submit a thesis until he was sure it was up to standard.

My last dealing with Oskar was indirect, two years after the conferral ceremony. I'd only just published the revised version of the thesis when I returned to Pac&SEAHistory to visit a research scholar friend. By chance I ran into Gavan Daws, who congratulated me on the release of *A Thousand Graduates*. "You'll present a copy to Oskar, won't you?" Gavan asked. I assured him that I intended to but hadn't got round to it yet. Gavan then said that several days earlier he'd been in the departmental library at the same time as Oskar. Oskar noticed my book on display on the 'new publications' shelf. "I supervised that fellow's PhD," Oskar grumped, "so wouldn't you have thought he'd show his gratitude by sending me a copy of his book?" Taking Gavan's hint, I went to the ANU printery, bought a copy of the book, wrote an inscription in it, then a letter thanking Oskar again for his supervision, put them in an envelope and left the package in his departmental pigeonhole. I suppose he received his copy, but I can't be sure because he never acknowledged it.

Oskar and I did not become friends, but I respected him and remain grateful to him. His initial requirement that I prepare a framework of chapter summaries to guide my research and writing helped me remain focussed. His advice on revising my thesis draft ensured that my three examiners accepted the final product unanimously. I was greatly relieved not to have been told I must revise particular chapters or — infinitely worse —rewrite and resubmit the thesis. Thanks again, Oskar! If you're currently gazing down on me from that great Pacific History symposium in the sky, please know that I still appreciate the boost you gave my historian's career.

The sacking of the Whitlam government

During my first year at ANU, a great political drama was unfolding in Canberra. This was the so-called 'Supply Crisis', which ended on 11th November with the dismissal of the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and the demise of his Labor government. Briefly, the background was that the Australian economy was in recession following huge increases in petroleum prices during the previous year. This was the time of 'stagflation' — economic stagnation but soaring inflation. Despite that, the government kept forging ahead with its reformist agenda. To pay for its ambitious programs, it tried raising huge sums in overseas loans, engaging a Pakistani broker of dubious character to negotiate a loan of $4 billion. This episode, known the 'Loans Affair', became a great scandal. It greatly damaged the government's reputation. As well as that, the government cut tariffs by 25% across the board. This impacted heavily on manufacturing industry. Unable to compete with cheap imports, Australian factories went belly-up; thousands of workers lost their jobs. These policies, plus various scandals and

controversies involving leading Labor ministers, increasingly brought the government into disrepute.

A turning point came in March 1975, when Malcolm Fraser replaced Billy Snedden as Opposition leader and leader of the Liberal Party. Under Fraser, the Opposition, i.e. the Liberal-Country Party Coalition, resolutely set about destroying the Labor government for its 'reprehensible' conduct. During October, the Opposition used its slim, temporary majority in the Senate to deny supply to the government; that is it refused to pass the government's money bills until the Prime Minister agreed to call a general election. That, Fraser knew, would allow the electorate to pass judgement on the government. Whitlam refused.

Supply, the money the government needed to meet regular commitments such as paying public servants' salaries, was due to run out on 30th November. Meanwhile, as the crisis dragged on, Whitlam and his ministers began exploring dodgy extra-parliamentary means of finding the money to meet its financial obligations. Eventually, on 11th November, the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, ended the impasse decisively by withdrawing Whitlam's commission as PM and swearing in Fraser as interim PM until an election could be held.

The election, held on 13th December, was an anti-Labor rout, a huge landslide victory for Fraser and the Coalition. In the House of Representatives Labor lost 30 seats and was reduced to only 36 members. The Coalition won 91 seats, a thumpingly huge 55-seat majority. In the Senate, the Coalition's took 35 seats to Labor's 27.

The dismissal of the Whitlam government was the greatest political crisis in Australia's history. As Canberra residents, we'd had ringside seats as we witnessed the drama playing itself out.

These events shocked me deeply. A passionate, deeply committed Laborite at that stage of my life, I was convinced that Fraser and the Coalition had stolen government from Labor with a devious Governor-General's collusion. I rejoined the Labor Party, attended rallies and fervently threw myself into the Labor campaign. I took several weeks off from ANU to work full-time as a volunteer at John Curtin House, the Labor Party's national headquarters in Barton, the suburb nearest Parliament House. I handed out Labor's how-to-vote tickets at a polling booth on election day; and that evening I helped scrutineer the vote count, which took place in the hall of the Telopea Park High School.

I was also so very angry that I erected a large sign in our front yard reading "This house is voting Labor to stop fascist Fraser's infamous rape of Australian democracy". Pissing into the wind, but it helped release my anger at the caretaker Prime Minister who'd precipitated Labor's calamity. The next morning the sign had vanished. I found it tossed down the embankment of the sports field on the other side of the road, so I re-erected it. I was then visited by two representatives of the Australian Electoral Commission, who told me the sign was illegal, When I asked how and why, they explained that it was larger than the regulation size for electoral posters and it hadn't been authorised. I then cut it in half and painted separate messages on the backs of the two halves, with a note saying that I'd authorised them. These remained in place until the election, but on several occasions rotten tomatoes were thrown at them. The tomatoes were also splattered over the front wall of the house. While the signs were there, passers-by would stop to read them. On a couple of occasions groups of people gathered outside and begin debating the rights and wrongs of the Governor-General's dismissal of a democratically elected government.

Now, 48 years later, I doubt that if I could relive those months I'd be such an impassioned crusader for a lost cause. I've meanwhile come round to thinking that Whitlam's government didn't deserve to survive. It had been the most innovative government Australia had ever had, but it was accident-prone and increasingly scandal-ridden. By late 1975, it could no longer guarantee supply. Through its failure here, it had forfeited the right to govern. As well as that, through its mismanagement it had let down its loyal supporters.

Unable to persuade the Senate to approve its money bills, its only option was to request the Governor-General to issue writs for an election. It steadfastly refused to do that. Sir John Kerr had therefore acted correctly in dismissing Whitlam.

The Governor-General, however, was not above reproach. Anxious to safeguard his own position, he hadn't let Whitlam know what he was planning. In my opinion, he should have plainly told Whitlam that if he couldn't obtain supply by a set date, the withdrawal of his commission as PM was an option. I was savagely critical of Kerr at the time; and I still think he should have let Whitlam know that dismissal was a very real prospect. Even at the risk of his own removal, that would have been the most honourable course of action.

The debate over these issues continues. Journalists, political scientists and historians still write books about them. As for me, the events of November-December 1975 left me traumatised. I felt disillusioned, deflated and disoriented. A naïve idealist rudely stripped of his innocence, I took years to get over my shock at witnessing Labor's ignominious fall.

Independence Day in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea achieved its independence on Tuesday 16 September 1975, eight months after I'd begun at ANU. With Margaret's agreement, I made a spur of the moment decision to return to Lae for the celebrations there, and to undertake interviews for my research in both Lae and Port Moresby. I spent a fortnight between the two cities. In Lae I stayed with my friends Jack and Mary Woodward and in Port Moresby with John Haugie, my former Brandi High School student, with whom I'd kept in touch.

On the Unitech campus I found that many of the staff from my time were still there. Others had moved away, either on sabbatical leave or to new jobs elsewhere. Those still on the campus included my neighbours Hector and Bori Clark, Neville and Peg Quarry, David and Mary Dale, John and Anne Sandover, Peter and Ann Greenwood, Bob and Helen Heron, Stan Smaridge and Adrian Boddy (who lived off-campus in Chinatown). Among the Papua New Guineans, now officially called 'Nationals', were Kabi Mande and Ben from Labu village on the far side of the Markham River mouth. Both Kabi and Ben were drivers I'd known and respected. I hadn't seen any of these people for two years. Even though most hadn't been our close friends, I liked them all and felt heartened that they welcomed me back.

Independence Day itself was rather a fizzer for me. It was a public holiday without any form of acknowledgement on the Unitech campus. The main national event took place at the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium in Port Moresby, where Prince Charles represented the Queen. (The British press was vastly amused that in *Tokpisin* he was referred to as *Pikinini man bilong Misis Kwin*, i.e. 'the Queen's son'.) As well as the speeches, the climax came when the Australian flag was lowered for the last time and the PNG flag was raised in its place. The dignitaries present included the Australian Governor-General and Prime Minister, Sir John Kerr and Gough Whitlam (who hadn't yet fallen out with each other); and the new PNG Governor-General, Sir John Guise, and the PNG Chief Minister, Michael Somare, who now became the inaugural Prime Minister. John Guise made the best speech. He said that Independence had come peacefully and that Australia and PNG would remain close friends. Significantly, he said, the Australian flag had been lowered, not torn down.

A regional ceremony took place on the Lae showground. I went along with Mary and Jack Woodward. I remember little about it other than that many thousands of Nationals had come to town and were milling around in festive mood. Among them were some of my one-time Pangu Pati comrades. They greeted me cheerfully and asked if I'd returned for good. *"Sori tumas, nogat. Mi bin kam bek tasol mi no ken stap long Lae. Tasol mi laik stap wantaim yupela long Independens De, bikpela singsing tumas bilong yupela"*

("Unfortunately not. I've returned but can't remain in Lae; however, I want to be with you for your great Independence Day celebration").

That afternoon, Adrian Boddy, Hector Clark, Mary Dale and I conducted a celebration of our own. I recall that it began when Adrian and I ran into each other on the campus. "How about we go to the staff club for a celebratory drink?" I suggested. Adrian explained that we couldn't do that because the club was closed. The government had banned alcohol sales for the six days of official celebrations, 14–19 September, lest the rejoicing degenerate into riots. We were outside Hector's home on Ramu Drive so we called in to see if he might have some beers in his fridge. He didn't, but he guessed David Dale would have some, despite the official drought. The three of us trooped across to the Dale estancia, 70 metres away on the far side of Warangoi Avenue. David was playing golf that afternoon, but Mary was at home. She said that all they had was an open bottle of 'San Mateus' rosé in the fridge, which they intended finishing that evening over dinner. "That'll do!" we said; "Will you share it with us now?" She invited us in, fetched four glasses and the bottle, and sat us around the dining table.

'San Mateus' is a pinkish medium-sweet *frizzante* (fizzy) wine from Portugal, best drunk when chilled to about 6 degrees. It was very popular among Unitech partygoers in the early–mid-1970s. We drank gallons of it. Nowadays Clan Willis only drink it as a joke and for old times' sake if an ex-Unitech friend is visiting.

After we'd sat down in the Dale dining room, the bottle seemed to empty miraculously. "Are you sure that's all you've got, Mary?" we asked. She said that the carton the bottle had come from was in the broom cupboard. There might be other bottles in it, but they'd be warm. We went to investigate. Five of the original six bottles were still in the carton. "David won't mind if we borrow one of them!" we assured her. That bottle emptied miraculously too, despite being room temperature, about 30 degrees in Lae. We were finishing the third bottle when David walked in about an hour later. After four glasses of 'San Mateus' each, we were merry if not tipsy. "Come and join us, Dave!" we called out. At first he seemed perturbed at the home invasion, but after a couple of glasses he was as happy as us. I forget if we ever restored his 'San Mateus' collection, but by the time the party broke up after the last bottle we were sure we'd celebrated Independence Day in the best way possible, affirming friendships.

As a postscript to these events, two years later I received an unexpected package in the mail. It was from the Unitech Acting Vice-Chancellor, Matthias Tigilai, whom I'd interviewed during my research. Inside was a bright, shiny PNG Independence Medal suspended from a red-black-white-gold-striped ribbon. Accompanying the medal was a letter on Unitech letterhead signed by the AVC. It read as follows:

> Independence Medals are awarded to those who deserve to be rewarded for their valuable contribution to Papua New Guinea's development.
>
> You were gone by the time Papua New Guinea gained its independence. But the effort and good work you did here contributed to Papua New Guinea gaining its independence earlier rather than later…. It was because more and more people had received some sort of education that Papua New Guinea felt it adequate to request independence from Australia and now we are enjoying one of the smoothest transition period in the history of the world. The number of educated people on the day of independence reflects the tremendous amount of work put into the system by people in the field. Papua New Guinea would not have been at this stage had this area slack in its functions. But because it had man like yourself in it that many Papua New Guineas received education and thus capable to take over jobs which were held by expatriates.

> On behalf of the University of Technology, I wish to congratulate you for the good work that you did for the University and through which you served Papua New Guinea and the medal is to signify the good work you have done for Papua New Guinea.

I resisted my English teacher's instinctive urge to go through the letter with a blue pencil. Instead, I felt flattered to think that anyone even remembered my Unitech years, let alone deciding I should be rewarded for them. I wrote back to express my gratitude. I also had the medal mounted and framed. Ever since then it has hung on my study wall as an emblem of ten eventful years in PNG. I later learned that the original Independence Medal of 1975 was a 'limited edition'. Only two had been awarded to Unitech staff members, the other one having gone to my neighbour Neville Quarry, the former Professor of Architecture.

Visitors

During my time at ANU and thereafter, Margaret and I had many staying guests. Our parents visited us from Melbourne annually; and our siblings and their families came to stay as well.

Other visitors included my old teachers' college chum, Ivor Salkin, his wife Pat and their three children, Vicky, Sean and Simon; and my Melbourne High School mate, Tony Irvine and his wife Helen and their children Marc, Sophie, Rina and Ian. Many of our Brandi High School and Lae-Unitech friends visited as well. The list includes Paul and Noriko Somerville, Pieter and Dierdre Degeling, Stirling and Rita Henry (who lived near us in Canberra for eight years, 1977–1985), Brian and Val Pell, Peter and Marian Lewis, Graham and Sue McLean, Hector and Bori Clark, Sue and George Argent, Pamela Riley & Neil Hardie (who married in 1980), Joan Michie, Adrian Boddy and his partner Traudi Line (who didn't live in PNG but learned all about it through Adrian and his buddies continually discussing it in her presence), Lenore and Richard Burton, Jack and Mary Woodward, David and Mary Dale, Gordon Holden and Lyn (his second wife, who, like Traudi, soon learned about Lae through hearing it talked about often) and Hartmut and Sue Holzknecht (who also lived in Canberra for about 30 years).

Many of these friends came to stay on more than one occasion; others came only once. 'Oncers' included Kabi Mande, who was visiting Canberra with a delegation of members of the Lae City Council; Paul Stirling, the Professor of Anthropology and Sociology from the University of Kent in Canterbury; and David Frodin, a botanist at UPNG and later the Kew Herbarium in London who knew my father.

We had so many visitors and guests that Canberra friends joked about it. "Who's been staying at Motel Willis this week?" they'd ask.

Occasional dinner guests were Hank and Jan Nelson and Jim and Helga Griffin, who'd settled in Canberra permanently post-UPNG. Hank and Jim continued as mentors as well as friends; and I greatly valued their good opinion of my efforts as an historian. Hank eventually became a professor in Pac&SEAHistory. Jim became a Visiting Fellow in the department but returned to UPNG as Professor of History; his final job was on the PNG desk in the Office of National Assessments, one of Australia's security agencies with its headquarters in Canberra. Helga spent many years as a researcher-writer on the staff of the Australian Dictionary of Biography at ANU. I always knew when Hank was on the phone because his opening greeting was "G'day!"; similarly, Jim always began with "Digger", his nickname for me. I greatly appreciated these Australianisms, which to me were expressions of mateship. While both Hank and Jim were still alive, chatting with them about history and historiography was one of my most treasured pleasures.

Very often our visitors provided an opportunity for going bush. Over the years we explored the mountains to the west, south and east of Canberra. We travelled to beaches

along the south coast of New South Wales; and we familiarised ourselves with the country between here and there, frequently with our guests.

We got to know the Namadgi National Park especially well. The park occupies 46.5% of the Australian Capital Territory's area of 2280 square kilometres; i.e. it extends across a vast expanse of 104,900 hectares to the south and west of Canberra, where it borders the Kosciusko National Park in NSW. Much of the park is pristine wilderness. A 20-minute drive from home takes us to the park visitors' centre beyond Tharwa, the ACT''s last settlement on the road south through Namadgi.

'Namadgi' is an Aboriginal name for the mountains south-west of Canberra. Aborigines began visiting this region about 21,000 years ago during the last glacial maximum, when much of the present park would have been under permanent snow. They left behind much evidence of their occupancy — rock shelters, cave paintings, axe-grinding grooves, carved trees, fire-places, and scatters of worked stone.

At one time or another we've camped and picnicked in the Namadgi, canoed, swum and fished in it streams, driven across and flown over it, hiked its walking trails, bushwhacked through its dense forests, climbed its peaks, clambered among its rock formations, jogged along its tracks on training runs, tobogganed down its snow-clad slopes, marvelled at its waterfalls, ridden our mountain bikes to reach its more inaccessible corners, and visited its Aboriginal sites to behold wonders that have now survived almost 200 years of white settlement in the ACT. We've also been amazed by its wealth of native fauna — kangaroos, wallabies, emus, dingos, possums, wombats, echidnas, tiger snakes and red-bellied blacks, lizards of all kinds, parrots and cockatoos, lyrebirds, kookaburras, magpies, and wedge-tailed eagles hovering overhead. Unfortunately, we've seen too many of the invasive species as well — foxes, feral pigs, rabbits, and brumbies, each wreaking its own form of environmental destruction.

On many of these excursions we took our ultralight 'Trangia' spirit stove to brew a cup of tea or coffee at our destination. Few experiences can be as joyful as admiring the vast Namadgi landscape as the billy on the 'Trangia' boils.

Sadly, now that Margaret and I are octogenarians we're probably beyond all that; but for decades taking our visitors into the Namadgi for some bush experience was among our best-loved activities.

Crossing the Saruwageds, Easter 1976

As an adjunct to my discussion of my ANU studies, and in the context of my love of bushwalking, I'll now recount the story of my greatest PNG adventure. It happened during Easter 1976 while I was living back on the Unitech campus undertaking my research there.

My next-door neighbour and bushwalking companion, Hector Clark, invited me to join him and two of his campus colleagues on a crossing of the Saruwaged Range. I accepted enthusiastically. Crossing the range had been an ambition of mine ever since I had moved to Lae in early 1968; and although I had taken part in various expeditions into the Saruwageds, I had never walked from one side to the other.

Our companions on this trip would be Robin King, an Electrical Engineering lecturer, and Matthew ('Matt') Linton, who taught Mathematics. I knew neither Robin nor Matt, but we soon chummed up and enjoyed each other's company.

The plan for the trip was to fly by light plane from Lae to Bainduong, a village with an airstrip high on the southern or Lae side of the range. We would then engage village people there and in other villages along the way to help carry our backpacks up the steep tracks through the rainforest to the edge of the alpine grassland at about the 10,000-foot level (3048 metres). We would camp there the first night then clamber up to the broad plateau forming

the top of the ridgeline. If we had enough time and energy, we would climb Mount Saruwaged then cross the plateau in an easterly direction and follow the trail down the northern side of the range. After that, we would pass through various villages on the northern side, making our way to the airstrip at Kabwum, a large village which was the headquarters of one of the Morobe Province's administrative subdistricts.

The expedition went according to plan during the first day and a half. We arrived at Bainduong aboard the plane Hector had chartered. We had no difficulty recruiting carriers to help us carry our gear to the next villages, which might have been Tukwambet, Awen and Kisituen, then up the increasingly precipitous and indistinct paths through the rainforest to the open grassland. After paying off our carriers, we pitched our tents then spent a reasonably comfortable night in a sheltered clearing.

The next morning we trekked up through the tussock grass. Early afternoon the clouds began rolling up from below, but when we were high enough, we caught a glimpse of Lae and the Markham mouth, and of the coast down to Salamaua and beyond. The view was magnificent. The Huon Gulf coast lay before us as if on a huge map. Higher again, we could see to the north-east. In the distance on the far side of Vitiaz Strait was the south coast of New Britain stretching away to the horizon.

But then, as Scots might say, the excursion began to 'gang agley'.

As more and more dense banks of cloud enveloped us, visibility was reduced to a few metres. We could not see any of the peaks or pinnacles to take compass bearings; and the faint track soon vanished amid the thick tussock grass.

By the time we were '*antap tru*' (at the very top), on the broad generally level plateau of the ridgetop, we were uncertain where we were on our map. We were trudging across tundra, a soggy, dismal grey-brown wasteland of bog moss interspersed with stretches of flat lichen-carpeted stone littered with frost-exfoliated rock shards. On either side were numerous ponds of shallow water, several about 50 metres and more across.

We had little idea where we really were. Our map, not very detailed but the best then available, was little help. It neither showed the contours at that height nor displayed the features of the landscape we were crossing. We were, we reluctantly conceded, lost! We wandered back and forth for an hour or so, trying to find a track and peering through the mist to try to locate features from which we might take bearings.

My guess, after consulting more recent maps and Google Maps satellite images, is that we were somewhere between Mount Saruwaged to the west and Lake Gwam to the east. They are only three kilometres apart, so if that was where we were, they were nearby.

At 4121 metres (13,520 feet), Mount Saruwaged is the highest point along the range. It is a rocky conical pinnacle that rises above the main ridge line. Lake Gwam is a tarn of glacial origin. In a hollow fed by numerous small streams, it is roughly stadium-shaped (i.e. rectangular with rounded corners), but with several bays and promontories along the sides. It is about 630 metres long and 455 metres wide and lies at 3517 metres (11,539 feet) above sea level.

Both the mountain and the lake must be among the most inaccessible places in all PNG. Few people ever go there. Those who do are generally from the highest villages below the plateau. They go there seasonally during the drier ('less wet') months, roughly May to September, to hunt the wallabies inhabiting the alpine grasslands. Some villages maintain 'bush-materials' huts there for these excursions.

All routes across the Saruwageds are difficult, dangerous and demanding. The perils include precipitous slopes, landslides, steep, slippery, narrow tracks, slimy logs bridging rushing torrents, paths that peter out, the dense, tangled rainforests, few campsites or shelters and the exposure and bleakness of the swampy ground along the broad ridgelines. Severe weather conditions are the norm. Dense fogs reduce visibility to several metres as the clouds

roll up from the valleys below each afternoon. The almost daily hours-long deluges of rain drench the mountains. Fierce winds sweep across the exposed plateau above the treeline; while periodic frost, and gale-driven hail, sleet and occasionally snow are additional hazards for travellers in the high Saruwageds.

One couple who braved the Saruwageds about 23 years ago were the geologists Wibjörn Karlen (1937–2021) of the University of Stockholm and Michael L. Prentice from the University of Indiana. They were there to examine Lake Gwam. Amazingly, after setting up camp there they built a raft so they could take core samples from the lake floor. A safe bet would be that that was the first time the lake had ever been sailed on!

Equally surprising is that now a bamboo helipad is laid out beside the lake. This is for the helicopters bringing in engineers to service a nearby telecommunications relay station.

And as if that is not enough, a Melbourne adventure tour company now offers an eight-day expedition from Port Moresby to Mount Saruwaged for €2915 (Aus$4894). On the first day out from Port Moresby the tour party reaches Kiroro village, the highest in the Kwama River headwaters on the north side of the range, where the company maintains a guest house. Day 2 involves an ascent to a place called Mono further up the range in the forest at the 2450-metre (8039-foot) level. From Mono on Day 3, the party climbs to 'Grassland Camp', a campsite above the tree-line at the 3680-metre (12,074-foot) level. Day 4 sees them arrive at the next camp, near Lake Gwam. On Day 5 they trek across the tundra to their base camp at the 3940-metre (12,927-foot) level on the south-eastern flank of Mount Saruwaged. From the base camp, over the next two days they climb the mountain and several other nearby 4000-metre pinnacles. Day 8 they are helicoptered to Lae for their flight back to Moresby. For an extra $750 the company provides a local carrier, hiring whom it recommends strongly.

The Melbourne company's clients obviously see much if their trip runs according to schedule. We, however, saw neither the mountain nor the lake as we wended our uncertain way across the plateau. That does not mean they were not nearby, just that the all-enveloping fog was so dense we could not see them. That makes me wonder what contingency plans the company might have for parties that become fog-bound.

In 1976, however, such expeditions were a long way in the future; and we never could have imagined they'd one day be possible. On our excursion, our main concern of the moment was finding our way down from the plateau.

Guided by Matthew ('Matt') Linton, the mathematician and best map-reader, who was good at mentally calculating distances, heights and angles, we decided to follow a north-easterly compass bearing across the tundra of *antap tru* (i.e. the Saruwaged plateau). By about 4.00 p.m. we reached the escarpment on the northern edge of the plateau.

Matt pointed down the steep slope below us. "We must follow that ridge," he announced, "because it will lead us down to the nearest villages." We trekked down for maybe 15 minutes until the slope had narrowed to a ridge spine that dropped away in front of us for what seemed like hundreds of metres. Matt declared that that was the ridge we must descend.

Robin, Hector and I looked aghast at each other. "Going down there would be suicidal!" we protested. The three of us said we would be better off clambering back up to the plateau to see if we could find another way out.

But Matt was insistent. "I'll go first," he assured us; "follow me and I'll show you we can do it!" We replied that we would not follow until he had reached somewhere safe and could clearly see the way forward.

Matt set off cautiously, step by step. He had only descended about five metres when his feet slithered from beneath him. He began sliding down the slope and out of view on his backside. He desperately grasped at the tussock grass to halt his descent and prevent himself from hurtling into space.

Fortunately, Matt got a firm grip on a small shrub without uprooting it. He lay there shocked, grasping his shrub for a minute or two, then turned himself over. Slowly, ever so carefully, he climbed back to where we were standing, horrified at what we had just witnessed. We were only about 20 metres above him, but he took 20 minutes to reach us.

Matt then sat there exhausted for about 15 minutes as he regained his composure. He knew he had had a close call, that he had escaped death by a whisker.

We three others refrained from saying so, but we all realised that if the four of us had ventured down Matt's ridge, the risk of someone dropping to his death would have multiplied by a factor of four.

When Matt was ready, we wearily plodded back uphill to the plateau. That took us half an hour. On the way sleet was swirling around us. By the time we reached the top we knew that night would soon be falling, so we began looking round for somewhere to pitch the tents. We soon found a sheltered hollow on the lee side of the escarpment. It offered protection from the prevailing northerly winds. That was where we camped.

What followed was the most miserable night of my entire life. I was grimy, wet, cold and depressed, uncertain what the morrow might hold. My chief worry was that we might not find a way down from the bleak, inhospitable plateau. We could die of exposure there; we could fall down some precipice; and we might run out of food. The others, I guess, were thinking much the same.

Heavy rain fell during the night. I was sharing Hector's two-man tent, which lacked a built-in waterproof floor and which in any case he had not erected to be completely weather-proof. During the night we discovered a rivulet trickling through the tent. Despite our groundsheets, the bottom ends of our sleeping bags were saturated. After that, we sat as far away from the steady streamlet as we could, the dry portions of our sleeping bags wrapped round us like shawls. We dozed fitfully in that position for the rest of the night.

By first light, about 6.00 a.m., I was up, dressed and clambering from the tent to 'answer a call of nature'. I walked about 20 paces, looked around to see if this was far enough from the tents, when, lo and behold, to my great surprise there at my very feet was a path. To my right it plainly led down from the escarpment; to my left it ran past our campsite and back across the plateau.

"Hey, cobbers, come and have a Captain Cook at what I've just found!" I yelled. (I enjoyed using such archaic Australianisms because my three companions were genteel Englishmen.)

The others stumbled from their tents and joined me. In amazement and relief they gazed to the right and the left. No doubt about it: we were on a path! If we followed it, we would surely find the north side villages Matt had been promising us before his near miss the previous afternoon.

Breakfast that morning was a more cheerful meal than yesterday evening's gloomy and frugal repast. We speculated on where we might end up that night, but because we did not know where we were, we could not really tell.

We were packed up and following our path by 7.00 o'clock. It led down a steep ridge several hundred metres east of the one that Matt had tried to descend the previous afternoon. The further we went, the easier the track was to follow. It zigzagged sharply down a knife-edge ridge with steep slopes on either side, but there was little chance of losing it. If we had stumbled off the path, however, we would have fallen hundreds of metres.

Eventually the steep descent put pressure on our knees. We rested every hour or so, sitting on the track, relieving our sore knees, thus avoiding wobbling when we began walking again. Soaking in the sunshine was a welcome change from slogging through yesterday's heavy fog, sleet and rain.

By about mid-afternoon our track took us down from the grassland and through the rainforest. The further it went the less precipitous it became. We realised we were coming into village territory when we could see secondary growth off to the right below us. That meant old and disused gardens, and so a village must be somewhere up ahead.

At about 5.00 p.m. the track broadened as it reached a riverbank, where it swung left and skirted the shallow but turbulent river. By this stage, we had been following our path for 10 hours.

After another half hour, we saw a welcome sight as we rounded a bend. About 30 metres ahead of us was a *lapun* (elderly chap). All he was wearing was the traditional *mal*, a short tapa cloth apron held in place at the front by a G-string. *"Apinun, yangpela!"* (Good afternoon, young man), I called out. He shrieked in fear, spun around, and tore off down the track. He was soon lost to sight in the gathering dusk. As night fell, we continued along the path, confident that we must be approaching a village.

Within another half hour we could see flickering lights ahead. It was a party of village men holding aloft *bomboms* (palm branch flares). They were coming to investigate what had frightened the *lapun*. He had bolted back into the village screaming that four *masalai* (evil spirits) were chasing him. When they realised that we harmless if dishevelled white blokes were the *masalai*, we all enjoyed the joke.

The welcoming party then escorted us to the village, which was another 15 minutes away, up a steep ridge. Once we got there, they showed us to the *Haus Kiap*, and invited us to make ourselves comfortable. A couple of them lit a fire for us and said they would be back soon with boiling water for cups of tea and a bowl of freshly cooked *kaukau* (sweet potato). We meanwhile unrolled our sleeping bags so they might dry out, then lay back enjoying the feeling of relief after having reached safety at last. By that time we'd been on the track for nearly 12 hours.

When the *kaukau* arrived, steaming in its pot, I thought it was the most satisfying meal I had ever eaten. With the *kaukau* came dozens of villagers. Somehow, they all managed to squeeze into the *Haus Kiap*, sitting around the fire with us for an evening of *planti toktok* (much conversation).

Their first question was who on earth we were. We said we were teachers from Unitech in Lae. They nodded wisely because they knew what that was.

Next question: why had we come to their village? "*Mipela laikim wokabaut tasol, long ol naispela mauden bilong yupela*" (We just like hiking around your beautiful mountains). We explained further that we had flown into Bainduong two days earlier and had started walking there.

They then told us that we were only the third party of Europeans who had ever come into their village that way. The first had been Mary Clemens (née Strong, 1873–1968), an American botanical collector, who had been there in 1937. The second had been a pair of Australian *kiaps* escaping from the Japanese during the war. This had possibly been Les Howlett and Peter Ryan in June 1943. (Peter later wrote about their adventures in his classic 1959 memoir of his wartime experience as a Morobe *kiap*, *Fear Drive My Feet*, which we had all read.) The conversation continued over many cups of sweet black tea late into the night.

I cannot for the life of me remember the name of this very welcoming village. Hector, who'd made jottings in a notebook of where we'd been, does not seem to have written the name down. The village might have been Gomandat, Hemelingen, Komutu, Honziuknan, Dawot or Sambangan if we had come down the Yalumet-Timbe River headwaters to the north of Mount Saruwaged. Alternatively, if we had descended into the Kwama River headwaters further east, the village could have been Degondo, Kiroro or Hatnon, Whatever its name and location, I remain grateful to its warm, generous, hospitable people.

We left the village at about 8.00 o'clock the next morning. We had rested well overnight and were feeling fresh, but we faced an eight-hour walk to Kabwum. Farewelling us, the villagers pointed us in the right direction.

The tracks leading us from village to village were well maintained and easy to follow. Along the way we were greeted warmly by the villagers. In several places they brought us each a *kulau* (green coconut) to drink from. (The spritzig coconut milk from a *kulau* is always refreshing.)

We eventually reached the Kabwum airstrip at about 5.00 that afternoon. We set up camp in the open-ended aeroplane hanger, where we passed a comfortable night. Our charter flight back to Lae arrived on time the next morning at about 10.00 a.m.

The flight back to Lae took us over the route we had walked two days earlier as we descended the northern side of the range. We couldn't believe how tall and steep it was. It seemed to be cliffs and crags all the way for many hundreds of metres of almost vertical descent. "Did we really walk down that?" we gasped in amazement.

A couple of hours later we were back on the Unitech campus, showered, shaved and ready for that afternoon's work. For my three companions that meant their teaching duties; for me it was time among the university archives.

And so our great Easter 1976 adventure crossing the Saruwageds was bookended by mundane normality. Resuming routine activities was an anticlimax, but what a relief to know our bones would not be bleaching *antap tru* in the Saruwageds!

A few days later I wrote to Peter Ryan to tell him what we had accomplished. By this stage, Peter was the director of Melbourne University Press. He had published my first book two years earlier. I sent him a photo of us *antap tru* as proof. "Very good, Willis," he wrote back, "but you weren't being chased by Japanese shooting at you like I was when I made my crossing 33 years ago!"

Sadly, neither Matt nor Robin have lived long enough to read this article. Matt was killed in a plane crash in Thailand in 1991. Robin drowned in July 2022 after he and his wife Penny were swept off rocks near Moonee Beach on the NSW central coast. After Unitech Robin had a distinguished career in Australian universities. He became a senior lecturer at the University of NSW and an associate professor at the University of Sydney, Before his retirement in 2007 he had spent ten years as the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Division of Information Technology, Engineering, and the Environment at the University of South Australia.

Robin and I had been exchanging emails in the years before his death because he had been advising me about the routes across the Saruwageds. As a leading member of the Unitech Explorers' Club, he had mapped the tracks. I wanted to know more about them for one of the chapters in my book *Operation Postern: The battle for Lae against the Japanese, 1943*, in which I charted the withdrawal of the Japanese Army from Lae in September–October 1943. (The Japanese had escaped the Allies in Lae by trekking over the Saruwageds to the Huon Peninsula north coast.) Robin had read and commented on that chapter in draft. I am sorry he will not now be receiving his complimentary copy of my book; but if he is looking over my shoulder as I write this, he might be pleased to know that his name appears in my acknowledgements.

As for Hector, who now lives in retirement in Budapest, he undertook much more Saruwageds trekking than I did. He tells me that sometimes his guides were reluctant to lead him where he wished to go. "*Ples nogut, masta!*" (It is a bad place!) they would caution him. Wisely, he could accept that their intimate knowledge of their own territory was better than the best of maps and all the modern gee-whizzery of satellite-based navigational aids.

The hazards of the Saruwageds attracted worldwide media attention in August 2019 when 16 people from Lae died while attempting to cross the range. Their destination was

Indagen, a village 60 kilometres north-east of Lae, 20 kilometres north-east of Mount Saruwaged and 11 kilometres south-east of Kabwum.

Those who died were members of several large parties on a pilgrimage from Lae for the centenary celebrations of the Lutheran church at Indagen. Indagen has an airstrip, but the pilgrims had decided to walk rather than fly because they could not afford the fare. Becoming lost on the way, they variously died of cold, exposure, hunger and injuries they had suffered. With great difficulty, helicopter crews later retrieved their bodies.

These events led to demands for the construction of an Indagen-Lae road. The Morobe Provincial Government eventually committed itself to this project. The Morobe Governor, Luther Wenge, performed a sod-turning ceremony at Indagen on 1 September 2023. He allocated 2 million Kina for plotting the route. A team of 32 surveyors, including volunteers from nearby villages, were at work on the ground by the end of the month. The National Government had pledged 100 million Kina for the project over ten years.

Whatever route is followed, constructing and maintaining a road across the Saruwageds will be a formidable engineering challenge.

Readers familiar with the history of road building in Papua New Guinea will be reminded of the famous Wau–Bulldog road of 1943. This was the Army route from Wau south across the Central Ranges to Bulldog on the upper Lakekamu River, which drains south into the Gulf of Papua
. The Royal Australian Engineers constructed this 114-kilometre road, which included 17 bridges, in only four months. It was a stupendous engineering achievement in formidable terrain and an adverse climate, but it was also a white elephant.

Once completed, the Wau-Bulldog road was little used because the construction of the Nadzab aerodrome near Lae in September that year rendered it redundant. Flying troops and cargo from Port Moresby to Nadzab was much easier, quicker and cheaper than sending them by road. The jungle soon reclaimed the abandoned road.

Final reflections

I've been Dr Willis for 47 years now, more than half my life. Since I was 'capped and gowned', however, my son Tony, his wife Kym-Marie, my daughter Katie, my niece Claire Charles and nephews Andrew Churchyard, Ben Ridder and Peter Cooper have also earnt PhDs. In addition to them, my Dad held a DSc degree. Even within my own extended family, I'm not accordingly exceptional in being a non-medical 'doctor'. Does my title therefore mean anything significant? My answer is that I'm sure it does.

I've already discussed 'the benefits of being Ian Willis PhD'. There have been other advantages beyond them. First, the PhD helped me gain job interviews. As a 'mature age' graduate, I probably re-entered the academic job market too late to achieve my original ambition of being appointed as a lecturer in History at a major university. I was nevertheless granted a series of job interviews for tertiary sector lecturing positions in the two or three years after my graduation from ANU. Those I remember were at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now the University of Canberra); Rusden Secondary Teachers' College in Melbourne (adjacent to Monash University, later merged into Deakin University); the Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education (at Lindfield on Sydney's north shore, later merged into the University of Technology Sydney); the Phillip Institute of Technology in Melbourne (formerly Coburg Teachers' College, subsequently merged into the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University); and the Mitchell College of Advanced Education at Wagga Wagga (now Charles Sturt University). I thought I'd interviewed well, but no job offers were forthcoming.

Eventually I gave up applying. An important factor here was Margaret's ultimatum. "You can take an academic job wherever you like," she warned, "but if you wish to remain married to me, you'll stay in Canberra!" She pointed out that for almost 20 years she'd been following me around the world, giving up good jobs and seniority every time I moved on. She'd meanwhile been promoted to senior teacher, was in secure, permanent employment, had good prospects of further advancement, and wouldn't accordingly leave Canberra. The children agreed. They were happy at their Canberra schools, had good friends, enjoyed their lives here, and didn't wish to move.

Eventually, in early 1990, my PhD was one reason why I was interviewed for the best job I ever had. This was as the senior editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* being produced by Aboriginal Studies Press, the publishing wing of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. My interviewers were impressed by my MA and PhD in PNG studies, experience which they guessed had bestowed upon me the sympatico and skills for researching and writing encyclopaedia entries and essays. I was given the position and spent the next 3½ years in it. It was a job I loved. I was always eager to get to it in the morning, and reluctant to leave in the evening. I was also pleased by my designation and status — 'Academic Grade 2', the public service equivalent of a senior lecturer in a university.

I've always retained regrets that I didn't gain a lecturing position and eventually become 'Professor Willis'. I'm disappointed that I didn't rise to that eminence as my friends Robin King, Gordon Holden, Paul Somerville and Pieter Degeling did. Perhaps for me that was a bridge too far. If so, I don't really mind because I've had a productive, rewarding and fulfilling life as a practising historian working independently outside the 'ivory tower' of the university History department.

Another good reason for being glad to have earnt my PhD is the sense of satisfaction and fulfilment it conferred. From my early years I've always been a scholarly chap, one who appreciates learning for its own sake, one who has always found excitement and adventure in formal education at all its levels. The MA and PhD degrees proved that I'd scaled the academic heights to enter the world of serious scholarship. I've now lived much of my life in that world. It's a congenial place to be. I've made most of my best friends through dwelling there; and it has introduced me to a legion of fascinating, memorable people I never would have met otherwise.

I'm also glad that my PhD was from ANU. Always among the very best of Australia's universities, ANU is currently ranked first among the nation's 43 and 30th worldwide. However valid those rankings might be, to hold an ANU postgraduate degree is a mark of distinction. Few if any material benefits have accrued to me through being 'an ANU PhD'; but there have nevertheless been advantages. John Gunther, the inaugural UPNG vice-chancellor alluded to these when he wrote to thank me for the copy of *A Thousand Graduates* I sent him. (I'd dedicated the book to him and Eric Duncanson as 'the pioneers of university development in Papua New Guinea'.) I no longer have his letter, but I remember he told me that my PhD was a significant achievement and, being from Australia's best university, it bore the hallmark of high quality. Further, he hoped that with such a head-start, my professional historian's career would flourish.

Margaret has reminded me that all three of our children and their three spouses were also ANU students. Tony and Katie both did their first degrees and then their PhDs at ANU. Kym-Marie, our daughter-in-law, undertook her first two degrees at ANU but her PhD was from the University of Sydney. Bruce Hoogendoorn, Katie's husband, did his first degree at ANU and then his postgraduate diploma at the University of Canberra. Rosie and her husband, Jon Garde, both have first degrees from the University of Canberra, but as part of their Psychology majors they completed ANU units.

As a concluding observation, I'll point out that to have undertaken higher education was an enormous privilege. In 2021 some 185,000 Australians had PhDs. That was fewer than 0.73% of Australia's population of 25,422,788 at that year's census. We're a tiny minority among the general citizenry but in most cases our higher degrees would have been funded from the public purse. That was certainly my situation. All my primary and secondary education was in government schools; and I paid for none of my 13-years (full-time equivalent) of tertiary education. The latter was essentially funded by government-sourced studentships, bursaries and scholarships; or it was heavily subsidised by my publicly funded places of employment. Few others will have had the benefit of so much education at such little personal cost.

The privilege of higher education at public expense does impose an obligation. This is to give back to the Australian community through voluntary public service. I can't be the judge of how successfully I've repaid my debt to my fellow citizens. All I can plead is that I've always been voluntarily involved in community organisations that have used my time and talents.

In this respect, I'll quote some insightful words from an unlikely source — the Austrian-born former body-builder, film actor and Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger. One of many quotes attributed to him is this: *"Help others and give something back. I guarantee you will discover that while public service improves the lives and the world around you, its greatest reward is the enrichment and new meaning it will bring your own life."* If you actually said that, Arnie, you're a wise chap!

12. DICKSON COLLEGE

After exiting ANU in March 1977 I re-entered the world of salaried work. My first priority was to find a job. It wasn't going to be the history lecturer's job I'd aspired to, because none was on offer. The easiest job to find would be classroom teaching, for which I now had excellent qualifications. Few classroom teachers can boast three university degrees plus a teachers' college certificate and a Dip.Ed. from a leading university. With 13 years of full-time equivalent training, I was ostentatiously over-qualified because many primary teachers at that time were still only two- or three-year trained. In secondary schools most were four-year trained, typically having completed a three-year pass degree at university followed by a one-year Dip.Ed.

But what school to teach at, and at what level? I could easily have found work in a non-government school and was indeed offered a History teacher's position at St Clare's College. St Clare's is a Catholic girls' secondary school in Griffith, an inner south-eastern Canberra suburb. I declined the job because I strongly believed in the principle of secular education; and in any case I'd always disapproved of the Catholics maintaining their own separate school system. Nor could I teach in one of Canberra's two Anglican grammar schools because I'd always strongly believed in the government schools and that was the sector where I wished to teach.

This meant I'd have to teach in the government sector, at either a primary school, a Years 7–10 high school, or one of Canberra's new Years 11-12 secondary colleges.

Finding a job

I soon discovered that winning a teaching job in a government school was a complicated three-stage bureaucratic process. First, I had to join the Commonwealth Teaching Service, which supplied teachers to the ACT, the Northern Territory and previously Papua New Guinea. I rang the CTS office in the Woden town centre to make inquiries. The woman I spoke to, a Mrs Green, had a strong Lancashire accent. She explained that I'd have to be interviewed, but interview time-slots were booked out weeks in advance. I asked to be placed on the list then inquired what part of Lancashire she was from.

When Mrs Green said she was from Wigan, I exclaimed, "Ah, *The Road to Wigan Pier*!" I had instinctively cited the title of George Orwell's 1937 book about the bleak conditions of working-class people in Wigan and other pre-war northern industrial cities in England. "Why does everyone say that to me when I mention the name of my hometown?" she asked. I replied that it was the name of a famous book, and that it was the one thing about Wigan that Australians who'd never been there could associate with the town. "If you arrange an early appointment for me," I promised, "I'll give you a copy." She responded by saying that she had a cancellation. "Can you come here at 11.00 a.m. in two days' time?" she asked. I promised to be there on time, replete with a copy of the book.

Mrs Green turned out to be a jolly and agreeable woman of about my own age. After I was seated in her office I presented her with the Penguin edition of the book that I'd bought for her. She was delighted with it. After glancing at my qualification certificates and taking a copy of my CV, she announced that I met the requirements for CTS registration.

Being CTS-registered, however, didn't mean I had a job. To secure one, the second stage of the process was to visit the ACT Schools Authority head office. The Authority managed the ACT government schools, which until January 1974 had been within the New South Wales system and had been managed by the NSW Education Department. The

Authority's office was in Macarthur House 2.5 kilometres north of Civic (the city centre) on Northbourne Avenue, the main northern approach to central Canberra.

I started off by meeting the Primary Staffing Officer. I explained that I'd just become CTS-registered and was looking for a teaching position. I'd been a primary teacher and was happy to be one again even though I hadn't taught primary for 15 years. He said that the Mount Neighbour school in Kambah, the next suburb to Wanniassa, needed a Year 3 teacher. He then rang the principal to say I was on my way. I spent a couple of happy hours at the school looking at several classes and meeting the staff during morning tea. I soon realised I couldn't go back to primary teaching because it was now an alien world for me. I thanked the principal for his time but explained that I didn't want the position because I'd been away from primary teaching for too long.

Back at Macarthur House, the Primary Staff Officer accepted my reasons for not wishing to become a primary teacher again. He then referred me to the Secondary Staffing Officer, a genteel Englishman called Pat Garnett. Pat said there was a vacancy for an English-History teacher at Melrose High School, midway between Woden and Wanniassa. He rang the principal to say I was coming. I forget the principal's name, but our 20-minute meeting did not go well. He radiated hostility, clearly resenting my accumulated university degrees, which inevitably would have been superior to his own. He said that if I joined the staff he'd work me hard. I couldn't expect to coast along relying on my higher degrees to win me favour. I could see I wouldn't be welcome on his staff, so I thanked him for his time and made ready to depart. As we farewelled each other he softened a little. He said that I would be happier in one of the new ACT secondary colleges and suggested that I should seek a position in one.

I reported all this to Pat Garnett, who promised to keep me informed. He rang me the next day to ask if I would teach Geography and Remedial English. If so, there was a job at Dickson College that had just cropped up. "Pat," I assured him, "as long as it's not Maths, Physics or Chemistry, I'll have a go at teaching whatever I'm offered." He then suggested I go to the college straight away to present myself to the principal, Ron Lane.

I duly met Ron and spent an amiable half hour with him in his office chatting about my training and background experience. He filled me in on his own background, which included high school in Dimboola in Victoria's Wimmera district, initial training at Ballarat Teachers' College, several years of being the principal of Birchip High School in the Victorian Mallee, and most recently a M.Ed. degree from the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now the University of Canberra). At the end of our discussion, I asked Ron when he'd let me know if I had the job. "Your class is waiting for you down the corridor! Can you start today?" I explained that I'd prefer a few days to prepare myself by looking at the term-units I'd be teaching.

This was on a Wednesday. We agreed that I could spend the next two days working in the Social & Business Studies Department's staffroom looking through curriculum documents and textbooks. I'd then start work the following week.

Ron then took me down the corridor to the department's staffroom to introduce me to my new workmates. The 'Band 2' head of the department was Garth Rees, who taught Economics. The other Economics teachers were Max Hector, Alan Harris and Kerry Jones, who also taught Business Studies. Richard Gilbert and Frank Lynch taught Legal Studies. And Bob Davies and Sue Willmot, the sole female member of the department, taught Geography. They were a cheerful, welcoming, blokey group. They called each other by nicknames. Garth was 'Reesy'; Max was 'Hector Thompson' (a former boxing champion); Alan was 'Shonk'; Kerry was 'Lazarus'; Richard was 'Dicky Bird'; Frank was 'Cranky Franky'; and Sue was 'Noddy' (a corruption of 'Knotty' from her maiden name Knott). Only Bob seemed nicknameless.

I immediately became 'Sir Eric', a reference to Sir Eric Willis, the current NSW Premier. This was greatly confusing for some staff members, who henceforth addressed me as 'Sir Eric'. They didn't know me but were aware I had obscure high-level qualifications which might even have included a knighthood. The Principal's wife, Jean Lane, a Fabric & Textiles teacher, kept calling me 'Sir Eric' for months until someone told her my name was really Ian.

The ACT Year 12 Certificate and its assessment system

I joined the Dickson staff just after Easter 1977. My first day of teaching was probably Tuesday 26th April, the day after the Anzac Day public holiday. I can't remember how the timetable was arranged, but I probably had four separate Geography classes, each of which would have had four 55-minute periods of class time a week. As well as them, I took a small Remedial English class, which met for two periods a week.

At this point I should explain that the then six ACT government secondary colleges — Dickson, Hawker, Melba, Narrabundah, Phillip and Stirling — were only in their second year of existence. As from 1976, the ACT's government high schools taught only Years 7 to 10, whereas previously they'd taught all six secondary grades, i.e. Years 7 to 12. They were effectively 'decapitated'. Henceforth, any ACT government high school student wishing to enrol for Years 11 and 12 would do so at one of the six senior secondary colleges.

Among the six government secondary colleges, only Dickson and Narrabundah had previously been Year 7–Year 12 high schools. The other four had opened *ab initio* as new institutions in 1976. Dickson and Narrabundah students who had been in Year 10 of the then high schools in 1975 became the Year 11 of the secondary colleges in 1976.

The first cohort of the government secondary colleges finished Year 12 in 1977. Except for Canberra Boys' Grammar School [Anglican], which opted to remain within the NSW system and present its students for the NSW High School Certificate (HSC) at the end of Year 12, Canberra's non-government schools, all church-sponsored schools — either Catholic or Anglican — chose to join the new ACT secondary college system. This meant that their Year 11 and Year 12 students studied for the ACT Year 12 Certificate.

The distinctive feature of the ACT secondary college system is that it's premised on two distinctive and fundamental principles, namely 'school-based curriculum development' and 'internal assessment'. The first of these meant that the teachers within the colleges wrote the syllabuses for the subjects they taught rather than follow syllabuses that the ACT Schools Authority had developed centrally. Thus, the Geography syllabus I would be teaching at Dickson was one collaboratively produced by the college's Geography teachers, but mainly Vince Newton, the teacher I was replacing, who'd taken a job in Head Office. The second principle meant that the students' achievement in their various subjects was progressively assessed term by term within the colleges by their own teachers, rather than them having to sit for a system-wide final examinations at the end of Year 12, as for the HSC in NSW.

Within such a system, quality control is supposed to be achieved through two procedures. Curriculum quality and standards are maintained through a triennial review process, involving expert panels of outside subject specialists, including from the universities, who examined the syllabuses of the various subjects to determine whether or not they measured up to tertiary education entrance standards. When a panel is satisfied that the syllabus meets its criteria, it recommends that the syllabus be accredited. The ACT Education Department maintains an assessment agency that acts on panels' advice to accredit or withhold accreditation.

The objectivity and accuracy of the schools' assessment of their students' performance was supposedly ensured through the Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test (ASAT). Students

seeking a Tertiary Entrance Score (TES) had to sit the ASAT exams, essentially a battery of intelligence tests, Students sat for ASAT about midway through Year 12; then, on the basis of their test results, they were assigned an individual ASAT 'score', a mark out of 100.

Term by term, the subject teachers assessed their students, giving them subject scores out of 100. If the student took a subject for one year or three terms, they completed a 'minor' in the subject. If they took the subject for at least 5 terms, they completed a 'major'. At the end of Year 12, they were assigned a 'subject score' in each of their majors and minors — essentially an average of their marks for the three or five terms. The subject scores for each class were then statistically manipulated by a computer so that they conformed to the general pattern of a mean of 65 with a standard deviation of 15.

The next step, again at the end of Year 12, was that the subject scores were 'moderated' by having the class members' average of ASAT scores applied in a complex computerised operation. If, say, the average ASAT score for Geography students was 68 and the average subject score was 65, every individual Geography student's subject score would be raised by 3; conversely, if the average ASAT score were only 63, the student's subject score would drop by 2.

The students' individual Tertiary Entrance Scores were then derived from totalling their moderated subject scores for their four best majors and their best minor. For instance, a notional student called Tamsin Trevorrow majored in English, Maths I, Geography, Psychology and German, and had also minored in History and Economics. Her moderated subject scores in her majors were English 67, Maths I 68, Geography 64, Psychology 70 and German 56; in her minors they were History 66 and Economics 60. Discounting her lowest major and minor scores (German and Economics), her combined subject score would be: 67+68+64+70+66 = 335 out of a possible 500. But that was not the end of the process because the combined subject scores would be 'standardised' to the ideal mean of 65 and standard deviation of 15. With luck, Tamsin's 335 out of 500 or 67% might become a TES of 67 out of 100; however, depending on how the computer distributed the combined subject scores to fit a bell-shaped curve with mean of 65 and standard deviation of 15, Tamsin's TES might be bumped up or down a percentage point or two.

Explaining all this to the students and interested parents was a challenge. I suspect that some teachers never really got the hang of it.

For me there were various difficulties with the assessment system. First, the assessment agency statisticians in Head Office, who supervised it, kept adjusting it to remove anomalies. In my seven years at Dickson, it was never the same for two years in a row. Second, the results in any year were unpredictable. Some years my classes 'ASAT-ed' well, in which case their subject and TES scores rose. Other years they didn't 'ASAT' so well and so the scores dropped. Third, that led to recriminations if students were relying on their Sociology scores to boost their TES and gain selection into competitive university courses like Medicine, Veterinary Science and Law. If they didn't make the grade, they'd protest that the fault was mine. "We wanted to gain admission to the combined Arts-Law degree," they might say accusingly; "but your Sociology scores let us down, so we've missed out on Law and can only now do a useless Arts degree!"

Eventually I came round to thinking that the old exam-based HSC was preferable. In that system, 'blame' for poor performance could be deflected from the teacher to the student and/or the examiner. "Why did you fail Sociology? You and I both know you were well taught and well prepared for the exam, so either you performed poorly on the day and/or the examiner marked you severely!"

Another problem was that the system was open to rorting. I realised this one year when one of my students, who only ever performed indifferently on written class exercises, used to turn in near-perfect essays. In a class exercise she might score 10 or 11 out of 20, but her

essays consistently scored 19 or 20. I was certain her pushy, ambitious mother was writing her essays, but how could that be proved? To have made such accusations would have opened me and the college to legal action for defamation.

Yet another difficulty was that the ACT Year 12 Certificate included an assessment for 'Competence in English'. This was not a numerical score but was subjectively derived. It was known as the 'Principal's Recommendation on Competence in English'. The three possible 'grades' were 'Competent', 'Marginally Competent' and 'Incompetent'. The 'grade' awarded to each student represented the consensus among the teachers who had taught the student during Year 12. Most students were graded 'Competent'; but the College Principals had the power to overrule the consensus and assign a lower grade in individual cases. The relevant descriptor was then printed on the individual student's Year 12 Certificate. Those deemed 'Marginal' and 'Incompetent' were effectively stigmatised for life. A student whose certificate was branded 'Incompetent in English' would forever have difficulty in trying to secure a job wherever a 'good' Year 12 Certificate was a criterion for employment.

As I came to realise, only arrogant, insensitive Education Department bureaucrats could have dreamt up such a prejudicial system.

The daily college routine

Dickson was a large college. In my years there it had about 1200 enrolments, about 100 teaching staff and perhaps 20 ancillary staff (teaching aides, laboratory assistants, clerical staff, library assistants, a nurse, a janitor and various technical specialists). The college had so many students that teachers usually got to know only those they taught. Depending on class sizes, which varied according to the subject area, the 'average' classroom teacher would usually be teaching 80 to 90 students in four 'Tertiary Accredited' (TA) classes every term. As well as those, most teachers carried additional responsibilities. In my case that meant a class of Remedial English, a 'Registered' subject that didn't count towards the TES; but in some years I compiled and edited the annual college magazine, aided by and in consultation with the students' Magazine Committee.

The college timetable was arranged so that eight 55-minute teaching periods were conducted each day five days a week, with a 5-minute changeover between periods, i.e. a 40-hour teaching week. The TA courses had four 55-minute sessions or 'periods' a week; and the Registered courses had two sessions. With four TA subjects and one Registered, I was committed to 16.5 hours' face-to-face classroom teaching a week.

Eighteen periods out of 40 each week might seem like a light teaching load, so what did I do during the other 22 timetabled sessions? They were technically 'free' periods, but in fact they weren't. Few college teachers could sit back to enjoy a break from classroom teaching. Most worked very hard. Lesson planning and preparation for the TA courses took much time. Assessment was a heavy burden. Only someone who has done it can know how demanding and time-consuming is the task of marking 20 1000-word essays, correcting spelling and grammar, assigning each essay 'marks out of 20', and then writing a paragraph of comments as feedback for each student. Essay marking requires quietness and concentration. Like many other teachers, I accordingly took my essays home to mark at night and at weekends. Most nights in term-time were spent correcting and assessing written class exercises.

Departmental and general staff meetings occupied another couple of periods a week. Meeting students to assist them with essays, maintaining attendance and assessment records, organising excursions, and conducting parent interviews were further commitments.

Yet another duty was the 'tutor group'. This was the college's pastoral care system. Each teacher had responsibility for about a dozen randomly assigned students in a 'tutor' or advisory group which met during one of the periods on Monday mornings. The responsibility

of a tutor group teacher was to watch over the group members' welfare. This entailed keeping tabs on their attendance, helping the students resolve difficulties they might be experiencing, serving as a counsellor and being the advocate for individual students when necessary.

For many students, such a service was generally unnecessary, but at least they knew they had a sympathetic staff member to turn to for advice and help if ever they needed it. Students remained in the same tutor group for their two years at the college, which meant that most teachers and their tutor group members became friends. The more needy students would have found the system helpful in making them feel more secure and in adjusting to the college's demanding routines.

From my experience, most of the teachers took their pastoral care responsibilities seriously. I certainly did. I let my tutor group members know that I was always available to them whenever they might need me.

First year of secondary college teaching: Geography and Remedial English

I can't remember much about my year of Geography teaching, but I didn't greatly enjoy it. The students were a challenge. Most were probably taking Geography because they saw it as a 'soft option'. It was a 'Tertiary-Accredited' subject which meant they could include it as either a 'major' or 'minor' in the subjects contributing to the ACT Year 12 Certificate they would receive at the end of their second year in the college.

Exerting my authority proved difficult at first. In one class I had a gaggle of about six Year 12 girls who regarded lessons as a social rather than learning occasion. They chattered and laughed away, ignoring me and what I was trying to say. Eventually I solved that problem by ordering the two ringleaders to leave the room. "You plainly don't wish to learn Geography, and you're disrupting the learning of your classmates, so go somewhere else to continue you conversation! You can stay away from my classes until you decide that you wish to be taught Geography and can cooperate with me its teacher!" That had the desired effect. The two ringleaders flounced from the room and stayed away for several lessons. Eventually, somewhat humbled, they asked to be readmitted to my class. They probably never forgave me for disciplining them, but thereafter they remained quiet in class.

In another of my Year 12 classes I had a group of three 'toughs' — Rugby-playing thugs who were uninterested in learning as well as physically large and intimidating. They began picking on one of their vulnerable classmates, a slight, nervous and studious German lad called Bill. They'd address him as "Nazi" and "Hitler". I could see he was distressed, so after a couple of lessons, I singled out their leader, an arrogant hulking 6 foot 4 inch (193-centimetre), 14 stone (196-pound, 88.9-kilogram) brute who was one of the stars of the ACT schoolboys rugby union team. He'd just said something derogatory about Bill aloud, so I stopped the class. Turning on him, I said, "This college and this class have no place for bullies like you. If you want to show everyone here how clever you are, try picking on me instead. You and your pals know that if you try that on, you'll come off second best!" I then paused and stared directly at him and each of his mates in turn as my message sunk in. Any one of them could have knocked me through the window with a backhander, but they squirmed uncomfortably in their seats with all eyes upon them. Perhaps they sensed that their classmates approved my action. They, too, probably never forgave me for humiliating them, but the bullying ceased.

Teaching Remedial English was another task I didn't enjoy, but I was obliged to continue with it during most of my 21 terms at the college. It was a 'Registered' subject, i.e. taught for only two periods a week and wasn't included in the calculation of the Tertiary Entrance Score. My students, usually about six of them in each class, were generally a sorry lot — a mixed bag of sad teenagers with severe learning problems that their previous

schooling hadn't addressed. Some were dyslexic; others were near-illiterate; occasionally there'd be a Japanese exchange student with little English; one term I had a blind chap who used a braille-writer for notetaking; that same term the class included a lad who deliberately wrote so illegibly that his work couldn't be read. Another term I had to reprimand a pair of rebellious girls for their poor attitude the first time they attended, and they responded by boycotting the classes for the rest of the term. Most were antagonistic towards English teachers and resentful of the stigma of being obliged to attend Remedial English classes.

Given the students' diverse needs, and because it was only a 'Registered' rather than 'Tertiary Accredited' subject, I could do little for them in the time available — even if they attended regularly, which only a few did. Some persevered, but others attended intermittently whenever they felt like it. I had little time to go chasing them if they missed classes because tracking them down would have taken hours that weren't available. There was no syllabus; nor could there be for such a disparate group. Ideally, I would have negotiated a learning plan for each individual student; but, again, neither of us had the time for that.

For want of a better approach, I generally taught the subject by choosing a topic for each lesson, which we'd all then write about for 10 minutes. For instance, in the magpie-swooping season, the topic might be 'The last time a magpie swooped me'. All of us, me included, would then write a half-page on that topic. When we'd finished, we'd read back to the class what we'd written. We'd discuss how our paragraphs could have been improved with better punctuation, spelling and grammar. We'd then correct what we'd written and read the revised versions back to each other. This was a generally successful teaching method, because the students enjoyed it; they appreciated how I, too, was working with them as if I were one of them; and so we consequently did some productive work together.

I also used to provide my students with assistance for their essay-writing tasks in other subjects. There wasn't much of that, however, because most of them had probably chosen courses which required minimal essay-writing.

I doubt that I made much impact in remediating my needy students' woefully poor English skills. They wouldn't have learnt much in my classes because I lacked the knowledge, training and experience to make even marginal improvements. Over 40 years later I still feel remorseful in knowing that, like their previous English teachers, I let them down badly. I will go to my grave ashamed about that.

Teaching History

In my seven years at Dickson I taught History for only one year, 1978, my second in the college. Ideally, I'd have taught History full-time, but I was effectively 'frozen out' by the Band 2 head of the History Department. She was a former Physical Education teacher who'd recently upgraded her Phys. Ed. diploma to degree level by passing the requisite number of History and Archaeology units at ANU. She was currently working on the thesis for a part-time B.Phil. (research) degree in Aboriginal History. The three Band 1 teachers who taught full-time in her department all had the 'standard' B.A. pass degrees in History and English followed by the Dip. Ed. Their History qualifications were probably superior to her own, which might have made her feel insecure. If so, she certainly didn't want a chap in her department who had the equivalent of a BA History honours degree plus a MA and PhD in History as well. She made it plain to me that she had no room for me in her department.

In 1978 she temporarily lost two of her full-time teachers, Margaret Fleming and John Carter. Margaret, a brilliant, dynamic and enterprising Australian History teacher, took maternity leave that year; and John, a highly effective European History teacher with an impish sense of humour, was due to go on teacher exchange to Canada. To cover their classes, she was obliged to bring in several other qualified History teachers from other

departments. Perhaps reluctantly, she offered me Margaret's Australian History and John's European History classes. I gladly accepted because I much preferred teaching History to Geography.

The History classes were only half my timetable allocation. I continued teaching a class of Remedial English, but the rest of my time was spent teaching two Sociology classes, more of which later, in the next section.

I greatly enjoyed my year of teaching History; and my students seemed to appreciate my enthusiasm. I took a different approach to that of the department. The department generally regarded itself as an academy for elite students. It imagined it was running university-type courses for superior students who'd major in History at university. It offered diverse courses. As well as Australian and European History, it taught Ancient History, Women's History, Aboriginal History, Mediaeval History and Military History. The enrolments in most of these courses were low. With about 20 students each, Australian and European History were the most populous. Total enrolments across all the History courses were about 90; and so only a handful of students enrolled in the other History subjects.

Rather than the bookish, 'academic' approach to History teaching for an elite few, I saw my role as 'evangelising' for History, making the subject appeal to all ability groups and students specialising in courses leading to university studies in Science, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Commerce etc. To broaden its appeal, in Australian History I ran the first and only excursion the department conducted in my seven years at Dickson. Using an itinerary that Margaret Fleming had devised earlier at Deakin High School, I took my students to Sydney to see historic sites such as Elizabeth Farm Cottage in Rosehill (Australia's oldest house), Old Government House in Parramatta Park (residence of the early Governors of NSW), Cadmans Cottage in the Rocks area (early police station), St Luke's Church in Liverpool and St Matthew's Church in Windsor (both designed by the convict architect, Francis Greenway) and the 'Old Sydney Town' theme park near Gosford. The excursion was a huge success. From it I learned that students would enrol in a subject for no other reason that it entailed an out-of-town excursion which got them away from Canberra and school for three or four days.

I wished to continue teaching History in 1979, but the department had no room for me. My classes were assigned to other teachers; and in any case, with four separate Sociology classes to teach now, I was fully engaged as the Dickson Sociology teacher.

Teaching Sociology

I became the Sociology teacher when Ron Lane realised that I had a MA degree in the subject. Sociology had been a course offering within the Dickson curriculum since the college had opened in 1976 but had never attracted many students. It was an outgrowth of the old high school Domestic Science curriculum, which included a unit called 'Food and Society' within the subject called Cookery (now called Food Studies). When the high school became a secondary college, the Dom. Sci. teachers redeveloped 'Food and Society' as 'Sociology'. None of them had degrees in Sociology but might have done a unit in the subject as part of their Dom. Sci. teacher training.

At the end of 1977 Ron established a new department, which he called Behavioural Science, to accommodate both Psychology and Sociology. Psychology was a highly popular subject that kept three teachers employed full-time. He hoped that, separated from Dom. Sci. and with me as the teacher, Sociology might also become more popular. Without asking me what I thought, he appointed me as the Sociology teacher and removed the subject from the Dom. Sci. department.

This was a strategy that pleased no one. The Dom. Sci. teachers resented having the course they'd developed taken from them, given to someone else and placed within a new

department. The Psychology teachers were happy on their own and didn't want a relative newcomer like me forced into their close-knit little clique to teach a course that wasn't theirs. I was apprehensive, because I'd incurred the wrath of the Dom. Sci. teachers, who wrongly thought that I'd colluded with Ron to hijack their Sociology course. At the same time I could sense the resentment of the Psychology teachers at my intrusion into their previously self-contained little world.

I also recognised that Ron had invested considerable faith in me and my abilities; and so I was determined that I'd make the most of the opportunity he was giving me.

In my first year of teaching Sociology, 1978, I took over one class of Year 12 students, about nine girls and one boy who'd begun the course under Audrey Koerentjes, the head of the Dom. Sci. department, in 1977. I also had a Year 11 class of students who were new to the subject.

In both classes my students and I instantly warmed to each other. I felt greatly flattered at the end of the year when my Year 12 class presented me with an expensive silver 'Sheafer' pen on which they'd had my name inscribed. (It's still one of my most treasured possessions.) They could see I knew what I was talking about and was working hard to make the subject interesting for them. They liked my style of teaching and my friendly, accommodating approach to teaching them. I took the view that if they were taking my subject, I had to be nice to them and care for them well because they were the guarantors of my future employability. Without them opting to take Sociology, I'd lose my job. That was the brutal arithmetic of teachers' employability in a system based on students' freedom to choose which subjects they enrolled in.

My teaching method also appealed to my students. It was relaxed, informal and chatty. I taught by sitting among my students and chatting with them about the topic at hand, more or less as I would have done if running a university tutorial. In any discussion, I'd make a point of asking them all to express an opinion. Some of them weren't used to teachers encouraging them to speak up. Most years I taught at Dickson various of my students told me that they appreciated not being talked down to, being treated as if their opinions mattered, and never the victims of teacher sarcasm.

Sociological theory is hardly the most rivetingly fascinating of subjects, so to make it as relevant to them as possible, I'd relate it to their personal experience. For instance, if we were discussing the class basis of Australian society, I might start by asking what social class they belonged to. Most guessed that they were middle class. "Why is that?" I'd ask. As we chatted back and forth they'd point out that their parents had been secondary educated in government schools, were white-collar workers in various commercial, public service, clerical and professional jobs, and essentially did work that relied on skills acquired through formal education. "Why don't you consider yourselves to be working class?" I'd ask. They'd point out that their parents weren't labourers or blue-collar manual workers depending on their muscle-power to earn a living. "Well, are you upper class then?" They'd then argue that their parents were 'comfortable' but far from wealthy; they weren't possessed of large estates and vast inherited wealth; they weren't celebrities or members of the international jet-set; and they didn't own major money-making assets like mines, factories, banks, retail chains, airlines, freight companies or news media conglomerates.

From discussions like this, we'd work our way round to the notion of 'relations of production'. According to Marxian sociological theory, which I then favoured, social class position arises from where individuals and groups stand in relation to the production process. Working class people are at the lower end of the scale because all they have to offer is their ability to perform physical labour. Upper class people are at the top because they own and control production, employing large workforces to ensure it gets done and make profits on their investment. Middle class people are in between. Their contribution is their brainpower

and professional, technical and administrative skills acquired through education. Beneath all these is another class, an underclass of people who have no jobs, skills, education or wealth and aren't accordingly part of the production process.

As well as class discussions of this kind, I'd take my students on an annual excursion to see sights and have experiences that wouldn't be possible in Canberra. We'd go to Sydney one year and Melbourne the next, spending two full days in each with two extra days for bus travel to and from. A Sydney excursion, for instance, might include visits to the Redfern Aboriginal Medical and Legal Services, the Newtown Migrant Resource Centre, King's School Parramatta (an upper class academy), Mount Druitt High School (decidedly working class), the Sydney Cruising Yacht Club on Rushcutters Bay (an upper class playground), the high-rise Housing Commission apartments in Waterloo (inhabited by denizens of the working and under classes), and the Mission Australia centre in Surry Hills (which ministers to the needs of the disadvantaged, mainly working and under class citizens). We'd take lunch and morning- and afternoon-tea is an upmarket shopping centre in an upper-class suburb such as Rose Bay or Vaucluse. At the various places we visited I would have arranged for someone to talk to the students and explain what work was done there. The students would ask questions, busily take notes and later write up an excursion report as a major item for assessment that term.

One important responsibility during the excursion was to maintain a watchful eye over the students' welfare. Some were away from home for the first time and might need comforting. Others might be isolates, without close friends among the others. Where that was the case, I'd ask one of the more mature and more responsible students to welcome them into their own circle. Occasionally there was bullying, which I'd promptly nip in the bud. Again, I'd get one or two trusted students to befriend the victim and look after them. I'd also make my teacher companions aware of the situation. Invariably they'd demonstrate their professionalism by sharing the responsibility of keeping the students happy and well-behaved.

As mentioned, my students loved excursions. The only reason some of them took Sociology was that it was renowned for its exciting interstate excursions. Excursions required a huge amount of effort and thought to organise and were stressful for me and the other teachers I took along to help with supervision. We teachers got little sleep during the days we were away; and we lived continually on tenterhooks lest some wayward student get into trouble in the free time we allowed them at night. Fortunately, most of them behaved themselves most of the time; and the worst that might ever happen was that one or two of the lads would return to our hotel drunk after spending the evening wandering the King's Cross bars. Fortunately, complaints from parents never followed an excursion I'd conducted. If there had been, Ron Lane might have banned Sociology excursions and me from running them. Knowing that, perhaps the students didn't tell their parents about everything that had happened. I remain grateful to them for that because the excursions were great fun and an excellent means of building positive relationships with my students. I was nevertheless always hugely relieved when we got back to the college on the Friday evening at the excursion's end.

Looking back on the many excursions I ran, I realise what a huge responsibility I'd assumed by organising them. If I'd been as fully conscious of the high level of responsibility I bore for the welfare of my students and fellow staff members as I now am, I might not have been so eager to conduct them. A busload of 50 high-spirited teenagers glad to get away from home and intent on enjoying themselves in the bright lights of a big, cosmopolitan and vibrant city could have been the recipe for disaster. Fortunately for me and my reputation, my students were generally responsible young people; they appreciated the effort being made for them; they were engaged and interested in the program of educational visits I'd arranged; and

they conducted themselves well. The excursions also encouraged them to think seriously about sociological issues.

I realised what a valuable part of the course the excursions were on one home trip from Sydney. I was sitting next to a student called Grainne (pronounced 'Gronya') O'Brien, a feisty lass of Irish birth. As we were chatting, I asked if she'd enjoyed the trip to Sydney. She said she'd loved it because she'd not only had a good time with her friends, she'd finally discovered why Sociology was important. "And why is it?" I asked. I now quote her reply verbatim: "As I see it," she explained, "Sociology is important because it investigates the unequal distribution of wealth, status and power in society." I was delighted with this response. "Grainne," I replied, "if you've learnt nothing else from me, you'll take that realisation with you wherever you go for the rest of your life!"

Redeveloping the Sociology course

At the end of my first year of teaching Sociology, I redeveloped the course. This was necessary because 'Tertiary Accredited' courses were accredited for only three years. At the end of that time, the Education Department's accreditation agency appointed expert panels to review the courses seeking re-accreditation.

I can't remember what the separate term-units were in the original course developed by the Dom. Sci. teachers, but I thought they were lacklustre and pedestrian. I accordingly took the opportunity of the re-accreditation process to revamp the course by rewriting the existing units and introducing new units to appeal to a broad range of students.

The course I submitted to the Social Psychology and Sociology accreditation panel comprised these eight term units, i.e. units taught for one 13-week term.

- Social Class and Social Mobility
- Race and Ethnicity
- Deviance and Crime
- Work and Leisure
- The Family
- Religion
- Education
- Health.

That was a total of eight term units. There were no prerequisites. A student could complete a 'major' or 'minor' by taking the requisite number of units in any order. I nevertheless encouraged all students to take 'Social Class and Social Mobility', which was offered every year.

At the end of the term, each student was assessed and given both a numerical score and a letter grade. Generally, students receiving a score of 80 or more out of 100 would be given an 'A'; 70–79 was a 'B', 60–69 a 'C', 50–59 a 'D', and below 50 an 'E'.

The course was structured so that a student completing eight separate units, which would normally take eight terms of the nine-term, two-year college cycle, would have a 'major' in Sociology. Someone completing three units would have a 'minor'. Over the years most of my students completed the full 'major'. They were the Sociology enthusiasts, who loved the subject. Others took the subject because, for whatever reason, they liked being in my classes or developed a personal attachment to me.

The accreditation panel approved the restructured course without demur and continued re-accrediting it every three years.

What I enjoyed most about teaching Sociology was observing the progressive scholastic development of my students. They mostly came to me fresh out of Year 10 at one of our three

local feeder high schools, namely Campbell, Lyneham and Watson. At that stage of their lives they were raw and rough around the edges. Thus, their essay-writing skills were generally undeveloped, as was their oral expression and ability to present an argument. Two years later, by the time they were exiting Year 12, they'd be writing well-constructed, well-argued, well-written, 1000-word essays. They could stand before a class of their peers and confidently make an oral presentation. And in a class debate they could hold their own by arguing their case convincingly. They were consequently learning much more than whatever insights into Sociology they were obtaining. Realising that I'd made a difference for the better in their lives, and had helped transform them into articulate adults, was a joy for me.

The Dickson Sociology course remained much the same in the decades after I'd left the college. On the spur of the moment I called into the college one day when, by chance, I happened to be driving past about 15 years later. I visited the Psychology-Sociology teachers' office to see if anyone I knew was still there. The office was empty because all the teachers were teaching classes at the time; however, open on one desk was the arch-lever file in which I'd stored my lesson plans and teaching notes for one of the Sociology units. On the bookshelf above the desk were all my other seven term-unit files, looking weather-beaten through repeated use. Presumably the current Sociology teachers were relying on the teaching materials I'd accumulated some 20 years earlier.

Quite a few of my students went on to major in Sociology at university; and one, Elizabeth Hill, even became a university lecturer in Sociology herself. Occasionally I'd run into former students of mine who'd tell me that my classes at Dickson had persuaded them to take the subject at ANU or the University of Canberra. I'd respond by joking that we obviously hadn't been wasting our time in the Dickson Sociology classes. I didn't say that I rather pitied them because, from my experience, university-level Sociology courses tended to be bookish, dry and sterile, overly preoccupied with abstruse theory and insufficiently concerned with the discipline's practical applications.

Within two years my Sociology enrolments had grown so much that I had to take on another teacher to run the additional classes. By my last year at Dickson, we had 250 enrolments and four Sociology teachers. Meanwhile, three of the Dickson teachers had begun studying Sociology part-time at ANU in hope of being able to teach the subject at the college.

Having been excluded from History teaching after 1978, I felt some perverse pleasure in watching the Sociology enrolments expand. In the one Sociology course we eventually had almost three times the total enrolments across all seven History courses.

Master Teacher

One Dickson achievement I remain proud of was to have been granted 'Master Teacher' status during my last year at the college, 1983. 'Master Teacher' was the term then used for what was later called an 'Advanced Skills Teacher'. A Master Teacher was a Band 1 classroom teacher who consistently demonstrated high-level pedagogical skills and provided leadership to his/her colleagues. For doing that, the Master Teacher was paid at the level of the Band 2 teachers, i.e. the senior teachers who headed the subject area departments.

The purpose of the scheme was to encourage outstanding teachers to remain in the classroom. Too often, the best professionals were lost to teaching as they became more involved in administration through promotion to the higher Band-levels. Margaret was a case in point. She was above all else an imaginative, very accomplished and highly effective classroom teacher; but after our move to Canberra she undertook progressively less classroom teaching because she was rapidly promoted to Band 2 (Infant Department head in a large primary school), Band 3 (deputy principal), Band 4 (principal) and eventually Band 5

(head of a key section within Education Department headquarters, Assessment & Reporting, which managed the ACT-wide literacy & numeracy testing program).

The process for achieving Master Teacher status was similar to that for being promoted to the next Band-level. The aspirant completed a long application form and submitted it to the Education Department. A panel of three of his/her peers was then appointed to assess the application and investigate the candidate's suitability for the award. If the panel approved, it would make a recommendation to the Department's Teacher Performance, Review & Selection Committee, which, acting as the delegate of the Department's Director, would make the award.

The process was rigorous; and only a select few made the grade. Lacklustre and lazy teachers would soon be eliminated. Each large school might have only one Master Teacher on its staff. When I achieved Master Teacher status in 1983, Dickson had had only one previous Master Teacher, Max Hector, who'd left the college and teaching four years earlier.

I greatly enjoyed being a classroom teacher; and I wasn't much interested in running my own subject department. By then I was leading a double-life, teaching during the workaday week but moonlighting as a contract historian at the weekend and during vacations. (In January 1980 I'd been commissioned by the Australian Priory of the Most Venerable Order of St John to produce the commemorative history celebrating the centenary of continuous St John Ambulance activity in Australia.) If I'd had to bother with running a subject department, I wouldn't have had the time to practise as a historian. Remaining in the classroom but being paid 25% more as a Master Teacher was an attractive prospect.

As things turned out, two Dickson teachers became Master Teachers in 1983. Apart from me, Mike Adamson, one of the Industrial Arts teachers, also became a Master Teacher. Mike and I couldn't have been more different in personality, teaching style, subject area or educational background; but each of us in our own way was an educational innovator. I guess we both were Master Teachers in fact as well as status.

Although I was gratified to have joined the select fraternity of the Master Teachers, I didn't remain one for long. At the end of 1983 I won a job as a research officer in Education Department headquarters. I transferred into the Public Service and remained a public servant for the rest of my salaried working life. I left classroom teaching without regret. I'd become increasingly frustrated with the vagaries of the assessment system. Student attitudes were also changing and, sadly, not for the better. So, too, were the colleges.

Many more students were staying on at school for Years 11 & 12 rather than leaving at the end of Year 10, as previously. The full-time youth employment market was shrinking; and the government had raised the age of eligibility for unemployment benefits. Not old enough for the dole, and with few job prospects, more students were opting for full-time schooling rather than leaving as soon as they turned 16, the age at which compulsory education ended. Such students weren't interested in learning, resented being at school, and were often disruptive.

Rather than being the 'matriculation academies' that the colleges were originally intended to be, they were taking on an additional function as pre-employment centres for generally reluctant students in their late teens. In an earlier era, such students might have entered the technical and trade-training schools. As such options diminished for these students, they became less respectful and less co-operative than formerly. The college system hadn't been designed for them; they knew they didn't fit into it and were accordingly antagonistic. As someone committed to learning for its own sake, I didn't see my role as behaviour management among unruly teenagers who weren't interested in academic learning and were only at school because they had no other alternative. I didn't want the responsibility of keeping such students entertained and occupied.

This attitude raises the question of whether I was primarily employed to teach a tertiary-accredited academic subject, Sociology, or to mentor individual students and to help develop 'the whole person' that each represented. I had no answer to that question; but I realised that I lacked the temperament, skills and patience to persevere with students who rejected me and the educational values I represented. By the end of 1983 I knew the time for me to be gone had arrived. And so I gladly ended my teaching career to seek new opportunities as a full-time public servant and, increasingly, a part-time practising professional historian.

Memorable students

In my time at Dickson I must have taught between 500 and 600 separate students. I remember many of their names and faces. Nowadays, however, 41 years after I left the college and without ever meanwhile having seen the vast majority again, the memories are blurring.

Among those I remember the best are the following ten. I've chosen them because they all majored in Sociology, I liked and admired them greatly, and they were among the best students I recall ever having taught in my 19-year classroom teaching career. I list them here in alphabetical order.

- **David Brudenall** (whom I taught in 1982 & 1983): David was the son of a Melbourne High School friend of mine, Michael John Brudenall (1938–2016), whom we called 'Mick' at MHS but who called himself John after moving to Canberra in 1960 to take a job in the newly created National Library of Australia. Mick/John spent his working life as a senior librarian there and later at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library. David bore a strong physical resemblance to his father, which is perhaps why I warmed to him. A 'straight-A' student, David went on to the University of Canberra, where he completed a BA in Professional, Technical, Business and Scientific Writing. He subsequently joined the Public Service, where he worked for various departments and agencies as a policy officer, writer and editor.
- **Sue Dunlevy** (1981 & 1982): Sue was the daughter of Maurice Dunlevy, an author, book-reviewer and lecturer in journalism at the University of Canberra (and subsequently several other universities). Her mother, Kerry Dunlevy, was a well-known Canberra primary school principal. (Kerry was actually the principal of Downer Primary School before Margaret won that job in late 1987.) Sue followed her father into journalism; so did her younger sister, Lyn, who also majored in Sociology at Dickson after I'd left the college. When Sue had graduated, she rose through the editorial ranks of News Corp, which publishes many Australian newspapers, including *The Australian* (national daily), the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), the *Herald-Sun* (Melbourne), the *Courier Mail* (Brisbane) and the *Adelaide Advertiser* among many others. At present Sue is the Canberra-based national health reporter for News Corp. As one News Corp website explains, she writes feature articles on the Australian 'health system, medical research breakthroughs, pharmaceuticals, health insurance and health politics'.
- **Julie Gregory** (1980 & 1981): Julie was one of a group of super-bright young students from Campbell High School who joined my Year 11 class in 1980. They probably didn't know just how bright they were, but I beheld their intellectual precocity with amazement. From the outset, they wrote brilliant, insightful essays that were a joy to read. After Dickson Julie did a combined Arts-Law degree at ANU, with a major in Sociology as part of her Arts degree. Years later, she and my older daughter Rosemary became friends. They married at about the same time, and by pure coincidence each had a daughter and a son that they called Grace and Cameron.

- **Margo Jensen** (1979 & 1980): Margo joined my classes after coming to Dickson from Campbell High School. I'd met her at the end of 1978 during the annual information day the college ran for incoming students from the feeder high schools. Even then she was determined that she'd major in Sociology because she was interested in Criminology, a specialisation within Sociology. She was one of the very few of my new students who already knew what Sociology was about. Like Julie Gregory, who was a year behind her, she did Arts-Law at ANU, with a major in Sociology. I don't know if she ever got to study Criminology; but years later I attended an in-service course with her mother, a primary teacher, who told me that she had become a successful corporate lawyer in Sydney.
- **Maryanne Marando** (1979 & 1980): Maryanne was the fifth in a family of seven children of Rocco and Maria Marando, an immigrant family from Plati, a town in Calabria, the southernmost region in the 'toe' of mainland Italy. She was the second of three daughters and the first child of the family to be born in Australia. The Marandos arrived in Australia in the early 1960s. They originally settled in Griffith, a city in the Murrumbidgee irrigation area of the Riverina District north-west of Canberra, which had attracted many other immigrants from Plati. Maryanne and her two younger siblings were born in Griffith. In November 1974 the Marandos resettled in Canberra, where Rocco found work as a labourer with the ACT Electricity Authority. I taught Maryanne's older sister, Mima (diminutive of Dominica), in my first Year 12 Sociology class in 1978; and I taught her younger sister, Silvana, in my last year at the college, 1983.

  Maryanne was a bright, sunny, emotionally mature and friendly young woman with a big heart. She had a huge capacity for befriending the disadvantaged and the needy. In part this reflected her own experience as an Australian-born daughter of working-class Calabrian immigrants: she knew what it was like to be from an ethnic minority at the lower end of the social scale. I had hoped that Maryanne might pursue a career in Social Work, but for various reasons that didn't happen. She later married Brian Drinkwater, an immigrant from England, and produced two sons. She inadvertently became a protagonist in the greatest crisis in my entire professional career, an episode described in a later section of this chapter.
- **Therese Parkes** (1980 & 1981): Therese was Julie Gregory's best friend; and they came to Sociology together. She was a slight, slim, dark-haired girl with long hair parted in the middle. She was the oldest of six children in a traditional Catholic family. She was majoring in the Sciences and Maths with the hope of becoming a veterinary surgeon and was taking Sociology as 'light relief' from her demanding Maths-Science coursework. She had surprisingly mature insight into sociological issues and wrote the best essays I ever corrected in all my time as a secondary teacher. After Dickson, she achieved her ambition of becoming a vet, but apart from that I don't know where her career took her.
- **Vesna Stojanovska** (1980 & 1981): Vesna was the older of two children, both daughters, of an immigrant couple from the former Yugoslavia. Her mother was from Gniljan, a village in Serbia near the Bulgarian border; Vesna and her father were both born in Skopje, the capital of present-day North Macedonia. Vesna was born during the disastrous July 1963 earthquakes, which destroyed about 80 percent of the city, killing an estimated 1070 people and leaving 200,000 homeless.

  Vesna was perhaps the most diligent and persevering of all the many hundreds of students I ever taught. Apart from Maryanne Marando, she was also the most caring. Having herself been through the 'non-English-speaking immigrant' experience in 'Anglo-Celtic' Australia, she was acutely sensitive to the disadvantages suffered by

migrant and refugee communities whose first language wasn't English and whose cultures varied from that of mainstream Australia. Almost inevitably, Vesna gravitated towards Social Work as a profession. After university she and her husband, Andrew Fisher, spent ten years working with remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia. Following their marriage and the birth of their two daughters, they became orchardists in the rugged Deua River valley inland from Moruya on the New South Wales south coast. They returned to Canberra in 2012 so that their girls could complete their schooling in the ACT secondary college system. In 2013 they both earned Master of Social Work degrees from the Australian Catholic University. Andrew was the son of a Canadian-born university lecturer and government adviser in Economics; his mother was a physiotherapist from Melbourne who met her husband while working in London. Andrew honoured Vesna by adopting the masculine form of her surname as his own — Stojanovski. Most recently Vesna has worked as a counsellor among recent immigrants and refugees while also caring for her two elderly and infirm parents.

Vesna tells me there are links between some of the students I've named in this list. Firstly, the Stojanovski (Senior) family were the next-door neighbours of Francesco and Dominica Marando, Maryanne's grandparents, who were also surrogate grandparents to Vesna and her younger sister, Flavia. When Maryanne's family relocated from Griffith in 1974, they lived for time with Francesco and Dominica before being allocated a government duplex near the Dickson shops. Vesna and Maryanne became lifelong friends at that time.

Secondly, Vesna, Julie Gregory and Therese Parkes had all been part of the same close friendship group at Campbell High School before coming on to Dickson. What a privilege to have been able to teach three such outstanding students in the same class for two years!

Vesna was also a close friend of Andrew Brudenall, who had also been through Dickson and was the older brother of David. Tragically, Andrew drowned while scuba-diving with an ANU party at Mystery Bay (south of Narooma on the NSW South Coast) in 1983. Like David, he'd been an excellent student and was in the second year of a combined Arts-Law degree course at ANU. I can't even begin to imagine what grief the poor Brudenall family must have suffered. If I'd lost my cherished only son in such appalling circumstances, I wouldn't have wanted to continue living.

- **Hilarie Tardif** (1980 & 1981): Hilarie was the younger sister of Jacquie Tardif, a first-rate student who was in my Modern History class in 1978. Hilarie, too, was a first-rate student who wrote beautiful, insightful essays. After Dickson she took a 'gap year' during which she worked for an optometrist and trained as an optician. I'm unsure what became of her afterwards, but an online search tells me that a Dr Hilarie Tardif with a PhD degree is a senior researcher in the Australian Health Research Institute at the University of Wollongong. She specialises pain management, a field in which she has published many articles. If they're one and the same Hilarie Tardif, she has clearly fulfilled the early promise she showed at Dickson.
- **John Trewin** (1982 & 1983): I didn't ever get to know John very well. Nor did I know much about him other than that he had a Celtic Cornish surname meaning 'white homestead'. He was a tall lad with straight red hair and glasses and used to catch the same bus from Civic to Dickson that I did. We used to joke about being Cornish Australians — 'Cousin Jacks', and possibly distantly related. I don't know what became of him apart from his being one of various former students who went on to major in Sociology at ANU. I've recently found him on 'X' (formerly 'Twitter') and note that he

now lives near Bega on the NSW south coast, from where he posts angry comment on political conservatives.

- **Justine Trethewey** (1982): Justine was another student with a classic Cornish surname. It means 'homestead of David'. She was the daughter of a local medical practitioner, a chap of my age. I jokingly called her 'Trejustine' because to my eye she looked exactly like I imagined Celtic Cornishwomen should. Sadly, she only completed a 'minor' in Sociology, which was evidently enough for her. She was an excellent, high-achieving student and a joy to teach. I didn't see her again after she quit my classes, but I've just googled her and wasn't surprised to learn that she's now a successful physiotherapist, has two teenage children and is still practising in Sydney.
- **David Vernon** (1982 & 1983): David was the younger brother of Julie, whom I'd known earlier when I assisted with a 'Caving & Canoeing' Registered course that she'd taken. He came to my classes at the urging of his best mate, David Brudenall. He was an 'A'-grade student in every term-unit. After Dickson, he went to ANU and subsequently earned qualifications in Economics, Politics, Law and Environmental Science. He worked in the Public Service until his early 40s, when he established his own publishing company, Stringybark Publishing. He'd meanwhile become a highly successful short story author and historian. According to his website, he continues as a publisher and author.

I remember all these students and many dozens of their ilk with great affection. They'll all now be in their late 50s and early 60s, much older than I was when I taught them. They probably never realised that the refreshing daily contact with delightful young people like them was among the main reasons why I remained on the Dickson staff for so long. Why seek some other job when being their Sociology teacher was so fulfilling?

Why do I remember these students in particular? Apart from being outstandingly good, they were all were committed, as I was, to human rights, social justice and making Australia a fairer, happier place for all its diverse peoples.

There was probably another factor that didn't occur to me at the time but which I've meanwhile realised. This is that I was probably best at teaching diligent, scholarly students who were most like the senior secondary student I'd been myself almost 30 years earlier, and also most like my own three children. I was a very good humanities and social studies teacher for the era of the 'traditional school curriculum' — also known as the 'conventional academic curriculum' or 'CAC' — which emphasised learning and skill in the literary, scientific and mathematical disciplines. That was my background and expertise. It was the pedagogical milieu in which I felt most comfortable.

How good a teacher I was for students less scholastic remains a moot point. I suspect that for many of them I was not the most effective teacher. They probably gained much more from being taught by the likes of Mike Adamson, my Master Teacher colleague, who imparted knowledge and skills in technical and practical subjects such as metalwork, carpentry, working with plastics, mechanics and technical drawing.

I've kept in touch with only two of the ten students named above, Maryanne and Vesna. I don't usually initiate the contact between us, but I feel flattered that they should wish to continue communicating with me. I greatly value their friendship and their loyalty to me. We joke about their having been my best students ever, and my having played an important part in their growing up. If that's what they wish to think, I won't argue otherwise; but what I do believe is that students like them were as important in my life as they guess I was in theirs.

Needy students

Some other students were memorable for different reasons. They were the ones I describe as 'needy' because they had desires they imagined I could satisfy. They accordingly wished to attach themselves to me to form a permanent bond. In most years there were several of them. Except for one lad in 1979, they were invariably female.

What they all had in common was the need for a 'father figure' in their lives. They were always from homes in which the fathers were either absent or disengaged. For whatever reason, perhaps because they knew I had teenage children of my own, they saw me as the male role model that was missing in their lives. They'd hang around my office seeking my attention. They'd come to me on the pretext of asking for help with assignments or to ask for my advice about the difficulties they were experiencing at home. They often wanted to be physically close to me as well, for example standing or sitting so near that it was hard to avoid contact. As a safeguard against their overtures, I'd try to ensure that one of my female colleagues was always present if I was in conversation with them.

I soon learned to recognise them because their neediness was so obvious. They were one of the hazards of the profession for male teachers, especially when they were attractive, personable and making it plain that they'd welcome the teacher's advances.

The greatest crisis of my professional career

In my 41-year salaried working career I faced, lived through and emerged from three major professional crises. I've described two of these in previous chapters. The first was in 1963 while I was teaching at Warrambeen, when one of the parents wrongly accused me of maltreating his daughter. The second was at Unitech in Lae in 1971, when I intervened to save a student from being 'terminated' at the end of the second year of his Business Studies course. The third was at Dickson College during the last week of the school year in 1980, when I fought to have Maryanne Marando's 'Competence in English' assessment overturned.

I'd taught Maryanne in all the terms she was at Dickson. I was also her tutor group teacher, which meant that I had a pastoral care responsibility for her. She and I had consequently formed a strong student-teacher bond. We liked each other and had become friends as well.

As mentioned earlier, the individual student's 'Competence in English' grade was the consensus view of the teachers who'd taught the student during Year 12. In Maryanne's case, there'd been 13 of us; 12 had assessed her as 'Competent'; and one, a chap of Hungarian background with poor written English skills, declared her to be 'Marginally Competent'. As principal, Ron Lane reviewed all the assessments. When he came to Maryanne, he ignored the 12 votes for 'Competent', homed in on the one 'Marginally Competent', then arbitrarily reduced her assessment to 'Incompetent'.

Why had he taken this action? He never explained himself, but my guess is that he wanted to demonstrate to his peers, his five fellow government secondary college principals at Copland, Hawker, Narrabundah, Phillip and Stirling, that, unlike them, Dickson was unafraid to make the tough decisions. "If one of our students is 'Incompetent', we're not afraid to say so — unlike some other colleges where no one is ever judged 'Marginal' or 'Incompetent'!" I could imagine him boasting at one of their conclaves.

When Maryanne received her draft Year 12 Certificate in the last week before the college broke for Christmas, she was shocked at her 'Incompetent' rating. She had loved English, was an omnivorous reader and had achieved high grades in her term-unit assessments in English. None of her teachers, English or otherwise, had ever suggested that her English skills were deficient. She came to me as her tutor group teacher for advice. I told

her to appeal the grade by writing briefly and immediately to Ron Lane to protest. I suggested that she should point out that none of her teachers had ever criticised her English in the two years she'd been writing class exercises and essays for them.

She followed my advice and was then advised that the appeal would be heard the next morning in Ron's office. The appeal panel would comprise Ron as Principal, the Deputy Principal (Student Welfare) and the Band 2 head of one of the departments. Her parents could also attend to support her. She then came to me to ask if I could take her parents' place because they couldn't speak English well and didn't understand the college assessment system. Of course I agreed readily.

As we arrived for the appeal hearing the next day, Ron refused to let me attend. I wasn't Maryanne's parent, he said, and the appeal system made no allowance for tutor group teachers to be present *in loco parentis*. I protested, saying that the process was unfair to Maryanne because of the gross imbalance in the power of those present. It would be one lone 17-year-old student trying to defend herself before a triumvirate of middle-aged senior teachers — a Band 4 Principal, a Band 3 Deputy Principal and a Band 2 Departmental Head. This without an advocate to support her and insist that due process be followed. Ron brushed aside my objection. Somewhat miffed, I returned to my office to continue with my end-of-year tasks.

About 20 minutes later Maryanne came to the office to tell me her appeal had been dismissed and that her 'Incompetent' grading remained in force. I was infuriated by the cavalier way in which Ron had behaved. I hastily decided that I'd draw up a petition to be signed by all 13 teachers who'd assessed her 'Competence'. The petition would call for the appeal panel's decision to be reversed. It would argue that we petitioners resented our gradings having been peremptorily overruled because that reflected badly on our professional judgement. I promptly typed it out signed it then took it to the other 12. They were as affronted by Ron's action as I was and signed without demur. I wrote and submitted the petition within the space of about an hour and a half.

I was advised soon afterwards, perhaps by the college Registrar, that Ron had rejected the petition. Next port of call was my friend John Carter, editor of 'The Daily Excess', a light-hearted staff newsletter which he produced every couple of days and left in staff members' pigeonholes beside the front desk inside the college entrance. John was appalled at Ron's action. He said he'd publish the petition in the next day's edition so that the rest of the teaching staff would know what was going on.

By 9.00 a.m. the next morning the entire college knew of what has transpired in Ron's office the previous day. Ron's reaction wasn't long in coming. A message was sent to all subject area offices summoning the teachers to a general staff meeting in the common room at 10.00 a.m. After we'd taken our seats, Ron strode into the room and began haranguing us. He said we all shared a responsibility for our students' welfare, but some of us were taking the responsibility too far. We also had a responsibility for the school-based assessment system, which was sacrosanct. Our responsibility was to ensure that it functioned impartially so that it truly reflected student achievement. We had a further responsibility to the college management and to him as the Principal. The college was not a democracy in which we all enjoyed an equal share in decision-making. He, not the teachers, was ultimately responsible for what went on at Dickson; and he therefore had to the right and the duty to overrule us if and when he saw fit. That was something we must respect.

By this stage, about 20 minutes into his peroration, we were all wondering what its purpose was, because it was becoming an incoherent rant. Perhaps sensing the general puzzlement, Ron turned to me with a demand: "I now call on you, Ian, to apologise to me before your peers here assembled!"

There was stunned silence as a hundred pairs of eyes swung from Ron to me to see how I might respond.

"What must I apologise for, Ron?" I countered.

"Yesterday you circulated a deeply offensive petition!" he replied.

"I admit that I signed the petition, but I was only one of 13 signatories," I pointed out; "so why am I being singled out to make an apology?"

"You were the author of the petition, so I repeat my demand that you apologise to me publicly here and now!"

"We the petitioners do not regard the petition as offensive. What is truly offensive is the set of circumstances that forced us to submit it to you!"

"Again, Ian, I call on you to apologise!"

By this stage I was beginning to feel sorry for Ron. He was painting himself into a corner, demeaning himself before his entire teaching staff, needlessly heaping humiliation upon himself.

But I could not back down and apologise. Doing so would have invalidated my support for Maryanne. It would also have suggested that my action had been frivolous.

"There will be no apology, Ron, but if you wish to debate your arbitrary and unfair action in the matter of the recent 'Competence in English' assessments, I'm happy to explain to this assembly why we 13 petitioners requested that you reverse a decision that we strongly believe was not only wrong but unjust!"

I went on to argue that to print the phrase 'Incompetent in English' on a student's Year 12 Certificate was a cruel penalty because it would stigmatise the student for life. I ended my short speech by moving that Dickson dissociate itself from the practice of subjectively assessing student's 'Competence in English'.

Ron immediately ruled me out of order because Dickson could not remove itself from the rest of the ACT college assessment system. He then repeated his demand, "For the fourth time, Ian, I demand that you apologise."

"And for the fourth time, Ron, I won't apologise because I can't see I have anything to apologise for."

I then crossed my arms and sat there defiantly, waiting for Ron's next move.

At this point, one of my co-petitioners, Meg Lovie, a Band 2 departmental head, intervened to end the impasse. "Ron," she said, "we're getting nowhere here and the rest of us have more urgent things to do than listen to you and Ian arguing. You demand an apology that Ian won't give, so as one of the petitioners I'll apologise on behalf of myself and the other eleven if that satisfies you."

"Apology accepted," Ron replied, and then walked out.

By now it was about 10.30 a.m. and time for morning tea. Some teachers were so shocked and embarrassed by what they'd just witnessed that they slunk silently away to their offices. Most, however, remained, joining their accustomed friendship groups to engage in conversation about anything but the meeting just concluded. Nearly all studiously shunned me as if to avoid contamination and guilt by association.

As I sat alone sipping my coffee, I soon realised who my true friends were. Three of my colleagues pointedly came to sit with me and console me — Frank Lynch, the Legal Studies teacher; Mike Sainsbury, the college counsellor; and Margaret Roseby, a Secretarial Studies teacher. They assured me that I'd behaved professionally and responsibly in taking appropriate action to correct an obviously wrong decision in a flawed assessment system.

Over the next few hours several other colleagues came to visit me in my office to chat with me and make sure I was OK. They included Lucy Kinloch, who worried that I might become suicidal; Margaret Bourke, who was appalled by what she regarded as Ron's unethical behaviour; and Tom Flynn, who opined that Ron felt threatened by me and was

jealous of my influence among the staff. I remain grateful to these former colleagues for their kindness and consideration in my hour of need.

The next act in the unfolding drama was Speech Night a couple of evenings later. My bid to have Maryanne's 'Incompetent' grade reversed had failed, but I still had one ace to play. This was the 'Best Student' prizes awarded in each subject area. Sociology was my call, so I awarded Maryanne the prize. The citation read: "Presented to Maryanne Marando for personally exemplifying the values and objectives of the Sociology course". Ron Lane had to present the prize — an inscribed book chosen by me — and read out the citation as Maryanne stepped onto the stage. The student body as well as the teachers now knew all about the events of recent days. As she crossed the stage to receive her prize, the 500 students in the audience gave her a rousing ovation. She waved her prize aloft in triumph as she exited. I was waiting in the wings along with several of her Sociology classmates to give her a huge congratulatory hug. Ron was not amused. The next day he issued an order that in future he must agree to the list of nominees for the 'Best Student' prizes and he must also approve the citations.

With the wisdom of hindsight, I realise that I should have handled the matter differently. If I'd been mentally agile enough, and not under such pressure, I might have proffered a qualified apology. It could have gone something like this: "I do not resile from believing that the student in question has been treated grossly unfairly, and I also strongly believe that we petitioners were within our rights in seeking a review of her case; however, as you are plainly offended by recent events, as I am too, I express my regret that you are so distressed."

Further, and if I'd responded more proactively as soon as I was told that our petition had been rejected, I should have lodged an immediate protest with the Director of Education. At the same time I should have hired my lawyers, Minter Simpson & Co. (a major legal firm), to seek an injunction preventing the issuing of Maryanne's Year 12 Certificate until the matter of her 'Competence in English' grade had been fully investigated by an independent and impartial authority such as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. By not taking that course of action and by failing to have the 'Incompetent' decision reversed, I felt I'd let Maryanne down badly.

In my own defence, I can only plead that the brief time available to me for effective action was severely limited. It was after all the last week of the school year; all my colleagues and I were busy preparing the units we'd be teaching in Term 1 of 1981; the Year 12 Certificates were already being printed and would be distributed on the morrow; and everyone was finishing off sundry end-of-year tasks ahead of the long summer vacation. In the meantime, we also had to get through Speech Night. Further, I wasn't then as aware as I am now of the force of a lawyer's 'letter of inquiry'.

Perhaps my greatest error was that I naïvely believed Ron would act in good faith to rectify the injustice so plainly inflicted on Maryanne. Ron, however, was one of the six foundation secondary college principals. As such, he was a chief architect of the assessment system. He accordingly had a vested interest in seeing it upheld. He would also have wished to guarantee its statistical validity. That would be demonstrated by a proportion of his students being deemed 'Marginal' and 'Incompetent' in their English language skills.

My friend Peter Serle, one of the three Deputy Principals (and subsequently the Principal of Campbell High School), remarked on this point in a note he sent me later. Peter wrote that Ron, in defending the system he had helped create, had conducted a 'kangaroo court'. Maryanne had been denied justice because Ron had already made his mind up the verdict couldn't be reversed. In defending an assessment tool of his own devising, Ron was blind to its devastating impact on the young people who became its victims.

My colleague Margaret Bourke was a wise, perceptive and highly ethical Psychology teacher who shared my office at Dickson. She subsequently became a greatly respected full-time school counsellor. She told me she was aghast at Ron's conduct, which to her indicated a low level of attainment on the psychologists' 'moral development' scale.

Looking back on '*L'affaire Marando*', as I can now jokingly call it, I'm proud of the part I played in it. I did what I had to; and it was important that I did. I had no other choice, despite the costs to those involved, me included.

Inevitably the Dickson College events of 15th–19th December 1980 left emotional scars on the protagonists. Ron Lane probably never really forgave me for giving him what must have been one of the worst experiences of his long career as a secondary school principal. The two staff members who'd joined him on the appeals panel were probably severely embarrassed because they'd been exposed to their Dickson colleagues as little more than Ron's ciphers.

Some of my Dickson colleagues regarded me as a moral leper. They chose to ignore me thereafter. I wasn't perturbed by that because their approval wasn't important to me. At the same time, I knew that the teachers whose good opinion I valued had agreed with the stand I'd taken and admired me for taking it. In the days following the staff meeting, they let me know they appreciated the way I'd exposed a serious flaw in the assessment system.

The Schools Accreditation Agency apparently agreed with them because that was the last year the pejorative terms 'Marginally Competent' and 'Incompetent in English' were used. I can't remember what, if anything, replaced them. Hopefully it was innocuous, for instance a letter grade, 'A', 'B' or 'C', for something appropriately imprecise such as 'General Linguistic Attainment'.

The most deeply scarred was probably Maryanne herself. Decades later she told me that she had never shown her Year 12 Certificate to anyone because she was so ashamed of it. To her way of thinking, the phrase 'Incompetent in English' negated the commendable achievement recorded elsewhere on the certificate. She hadn't undertaken tertiary studies, of which she was certainly capable, because that would have required her to produce the certificate. For the same reason, she hadn't sought Public Service employment. Instead, she'd worked in a series of private sector jobs until she married and became a full-time homemaker.

My remaining years at Dickson

I remained at Dickson for another three years after the events just described. In that time I worked hard at rebuilding my relationship with Ron Lane. He wouldn't speak to me during all the first term the next year, but eventually he had to acknowledge that I was an asset to the college.

Ron began to thaw during Term 2 in 1981. My daughter Rosie was in Year 12 at Stirling College at the time, and I'd recently attended a helpful Parent-Teacher evening there. That made me realise that Dickson no longer ran Parent-Teacher meetings, as it had done during my first two or three years at the college. I went to see the Deputy Principal who used to arrange them, to ask why we no longer ran them. He lamely replied that they'd been so poorly attended he guessed the parents didn't need them. He'd simply stopped organising them; no one had complained; and as Ron hadn't instructed him to recommence them, he hadn't bothered.

Rather dismayed at this response, I requested an appointment with Ron. I explained to him that I was concerned at our dearth of P-T evenings because as the father of a daughter at another college I knew that parents appreciated them. Further, I suggested that P-T evenings were good public relations for the college, a clear indication to the parents that Dickson was trying hard to do its best for their offspring. Ron agreed with me, so I asked if he'd let me

organise one. I pointed out that I'd discussed the matter with several colleagues in other subject departments. They, too, thought the college should resume its P-T program and would happily join a committee to make the necessary arrangements.

Ron gave me the OK, so I formed a committee which set a date for an evening meeting several weeks hence. We publicised the event among our fellow teachers and the student body. We sent letters to all the parents telling them that this was their chance to check on their sons' and daughters' progress. We arranged for Ron to make a speech welcoming the parents and emphasising how much value the college placed on its pastoral care program and on effective liaison with them as one of the college's principal stakeholders. The Arts & Crafts department decorated the school hall attractively; the Domestic Science department obligingly provided light refreshments; and the teachers from the various subject areas were ready with up-to-the-minute feedback on individual students' progress.

Before the parents departed, they were asked to complete a short questionnaire to gauge their level of satisfaction with the evening, and to request their views on how the P-T meetings could be improved to be more useful for them. The meeting was a great success and so we repeated them every term thereafter. Ron was delighted with the positive feedback he received and the enthusiasm with which his staff had supported the reintroduction of the meetings. He also realised that Ian Willis had his uses and wasn't necessarily the destructive termagant he might otherwise have imagined.

I'd made it plain to Ron that I bore no grudges about our quarrel over Maryanne's pejorative 'Competence in English' grade. I was working hard to do my best for the Sociology course, the expanding enrolments in which were obvious to all. Because of the growth, I was generating employment for other Sociology teachers. The excursions I conducted were becoming legendary. The editions of the college magazine that I published were collectors' items. All this brought me back into favour again, so by the time I left the college in December 1983, Ron and I regarded each other as friends and allies, albeit somewhat grudgingly.

Ron died more than seven years ago, in November 2016. I saw his death and funeral notices in the *Canberra Times*. As with former colleagues who've ascended to the great staffroom in the sky, I thought at first that I should attend the funeral. After further consideration, however, I decided not to. I guessed I might not have been particularly welcome because his widow, Jean, had been a teacher on Ron's staff during all my time at Dickson. She'd sat through the notorious staff meeting at which he'd demanded that I apologise, which must have been deeply embarrassing and distressing for her. She mightn't have wished to be reminded of Ron's humiliation by my presence. And so to spare her feelings I stayed away. Jean herself died only recently, on 9 January 2024 at the age of 93. That, I guess, means that of all the '*L'affaire Marando*' protagonists, Maryanne and I might be among the few still alive who remember it. Perhaps we can at last put it behind us as a bad experience that we survived. Meanwhile, our friendship continues; and we're both glad for that.

I could easily write a book about my seven years at Dickson, and the passing parade of students, staff-members and parents that I dealt with there. I'll resist the temptation to do so; and, if nothing else, that will save me much effort and spare my more avid readers the duty of reading another of my tomes. This chapter must suffice; and, if it achieves little more, it will inform my 'nearest and dearest' about the career-shaping period I spent teaching at 'Dicko'.

Teaching *versus* mentoring

Almost as a postscript to this chapter I'll allude to comments from Adrian Boddy, my esteemed friend and former Unitech, Lae, colleague. Adrian, who read the original draft of

this chapter, thinks I should make a distinction between teaching and mentoring. He points out that 'teachers provide instruction and guidance in a limited setting, such as a classroom', whereas mentors 'serve as long-term advisors who guide their mentees through life'. He knows I was a teacher, of course, but he believes I've been a mentor too. Thanks, Adi, for the compliment, but I've never sought to be anyone's mentor.

The mentor's role is inappropriate for a classroom teacher. That's because teachers are obliged by the unwritten rules of their profession to maintain an appropriate degree of social and emotional distance from their students. They do not seek a closer personal involvement in their students' lives. Some may achieve that, but the only ones who should are the professionally trained and officially designated student counsellors, who have attained postgraduate qualifications in their highly specialised branch of education.

From my own experience, mentoring happens in particular sectors of one's life but not necessarily 'across the board' and in the long term. In my case, in the 'historian' compartment of my life I acknowledge the debt I owe to Gavan Daws and the late Ken Inglis, Hank Nelson and Jim Griffin, four historians I greatly admired for their professional, knowledge, wisdom and skills. I was fortunate that they thought I was worth encouraging and were prepared to advise me at various stages of my development as an historian.

I can't remember any teaching colleagues who mentored me, but perhaps Jeff Keast at Brandi High School, Peter Botsman and Joan Michie at Unitech and Peter Searle at Dickson College were those who came nearest to mentoring me. They were all older, more experienced and wiser than me, so I was willing to learn from them. For similar reasons I also acknowledge my Brandi High School teaching colleagues, Pieter Degeling and Paul Somerville, both younger than me but always an important influence in my life.

In my St John Ambulance work I've benefited from my dealings with my confrères Ian Kaye-Eddie, John Pearn, Brian Fotheringham and the late Charles Campbell, whose encouragement, support and advice led me to remain in St John longer than I might otherwise have done. Writing St John history has been a way of life for me for the past 40 years. That that is so is partly attributable to them.

As for mentoring other people, I've never been aware that that's what I've consciously done. Rather, I've helped friends who in various projects they were undertaking had need of advice arising from my historian's and teacher's skills. I've seen the assistance I gave as one mate helping another rather than a lifelong adviser guiding a fellow pilgrim.

My own greatest life mentor has always been Margaret. She is much more intellectually acute and socially and emotionally more intelligent than I am. I greatly respect her wisdom, taste and good judgement and feel deeply privileged that these have been my lodestar since we came together as a couple 66 years ago. Margaret points out that we see and navigate the world from different perspectives, but over the 62 years of our marriage, we've each learnt to consider and respect the other's viewpoint.

13. PUBLIC SERVANTS AND WRITING HISTORY

My life changed course in January 1984 when I moved from Dickson College into the head office of the Australian Capital Territory Schools Authority. The Schools Authority employees were a mix of Commonwealth public servants and teachers. I remained a teacher but was promoted to the Band 2 level, i.e. senior teacher. In a secondary school I'd have been the head of a subject department; but in the 'Office' (as it was popularly called) I joined a small unit called the Research Section. I was the only teacher, the other nine staff members being public servants.

The Research Section comprised three separate and distinct cells — Policy Research (5 members), which investigated policy issues; Demography (three members), which undertook the demographic research that determined where new schools should be built; and Statistics (two members), which compiled data on school enrolment trends. Most of the Office was located on two levels of Macarthur House, in the inner northern suburb of Lyneham on the north-western corner of Northbourne and Macarthur Avenues. (The building was demolished about six years ago, but so far nothing has replaced it.) Research Section occupied an area of about 150 square metres in the north-eastern corner of the first floor.

I soon discovered that the Australian Public Service (APS; also called the Commonwealth Public Service) is a strongly hierarchical organisation in which everyone knows his/her place and is aware of the rank of everyone else above and below him/her. At the head of the Office was the CEO and his four Branch Heads, all of whom were members of the Senior Executive Service (SES). The SES officers were senior management — the APS's 'heavyweights', the decision makers. Below them was middle management, the Clerks Class 10 and 9, who usually managed the sections within branches. The Clerks Class 10 and 9 also did the APS's thinking and accordingly undertook policy development. Below them were the Clerks Class 8 down to 1, the APS's great majority, who did the routine administrative work.

As a Band 2 teacher, I didn't readily fit into this hierarchy. I was roughly the equivalent of a Clerk Class 9. I was below Mick Boesen, a Clerk Class 10, who was the section head, and roughly parallel with Kevin Gill, a Clerk Class 9 who was the Demographer, and Ian Petersens, also a Clerk Class 9 and the Statistician. Technically, I was above the Clerks Class 6 and 5, who made up the rest of the section; but because we worked collegiately, our respective ranks did not really matter.

A Commonwealth and an ACT public servant

I also discovered that the APS was extremely fluid. Members of the Office staff arrived and departed frequently as they transferred to positions elsewhere in other departments, usually after being promoted, or joined the Office from elsewhere. After I'd been in Research for only a month my friend Tom Flynn joined us as a Clerk Class 9 on transfer from Erindale College, where he'd been the Band 2 in charge of the Science Faculty. A couple of weeks later Mick Boesen departed and was replaced by Ed Murtagh, a former teachers' college lecturer who had just joined the APS.

I remained in Research as a Band 2 teacher for the next 3½ years, until mid-1987, when my job was reclassified as a Clerk Class 9 APS position. I had to apply for the job and win it through a competitive interview process. Tom chaired the interview panel. He told me later I'd won the position against stiff competition and had been granted no favours for being the 'inside runner'.

I continued as the equivalent of a Clerk Class 9 for the rest of my salaried working career, until my retirement at the end of 1998. Depending on the position I held, I was either a Commonwealth or an ACT public servant. I wasn't ambitious for promotion within the APS and was content to remain a Clerk Class 9, a middle-level manager. That was because beyond the APS I was developing a highly active parallel career as a practising historian, taking on commissions to produce institutional histories.

In the meantime, in early 1989 the ACT attained self-government. The Schools Authority, a Commonwealth agency, was succeeded by the ACT Department of Education and Training; and so I was automatically transferred from the Commonwealth to the ACT public service. In January 1990 I transferred back to the APS when I won a job as the senior editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, which was being produced within the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), a Commonwealth agency within the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio.

I went to AIATSIS under secondment from the ACT and was classified as an 'Academic II', the APS equivalent of a university senior lecturer. That job lasted for the next 3½ years. When it ended, regrettably, with the completion of the *Encyclopaedia*, I returned to the ACT Department of Education and Training, to a small new unit, Vocational Education, in departmental headquarters.

Education head office had meanwhile relocated from Macarthur House to Manning Clark House adjacent to the Tuggeranong Town Centre and only six kilometres south of my home in Wanniassa. 'Voc Ed' proved short-lived. It was shut down after only six months and its four staff members dispersed. Two of us, John Fahey (another former Band 2 secondary teacher) and I were reassigned to the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA), formerly the ACT Apprenticeship Board. I remained with VETA for the last 4½ years of my salaried working career.

Only one of these public service positions was truly memorable. That was my time with AIATSIS. My title was 'Senior Editor', and my responsibility was to research and write *Encyclopaedia* entries. I absolutely loved the job, by far the best salaried position I ever held. I could hardly wait to get there each morning to begin work; and I left reluctantly each evening. Being paid well for doing what I do best, namely historical research and writing, was a continuing joy; but more of that later. Suffice to say here that in my time working on the *Encyclopaedia* was highly productive. I produced the equivalent of somewhat more than one of its two volumes, more than half its individual entries, and well over half its total 'word-count'.

I didn't greatly enjoy most of my other public service positions. Unlike the *Encyclopaedia*, they had little 'product'. The work largely consisted of researching particular issues and then briefing senior managers in various minutes and memoranda. The advice I provided might be either accepted, rejected or ignored. It was never easy to see whether I was ever making a difference. I liken the experience to striking a punching-bag filled with blancmange. No matter how hard one punched, little lasting impression was ever made.

I also discovered that one's senior officers rarely expressed their appreciation of one's best efforts and that some were willing to claim the credit. A couple of examples make the point. In my first year in the Schools Authority's Research Section I drafted a long paper on 'Trends in School Design' for one of the Deputy Secretaries to deliver at a conference in New Zealand. He never thanked me for my work, but several months after the conference he published the paper as a slim book under his own name. His acknowledgements didn't mention me. Similarly, during my time working on the *Encyclopaedia* I researched and drafted the entry on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. As a courtesy, I sent the draft to the ATSIC CEO, a former academic historian. He sent it back several days

later with the curt comment, 'Approved'. My name as author was crossed out and his name scrawled in its place.

On the other hand, in my time as a public servant, especially during my VETA years, I made numerous friends, some of whom I keep in touch with. They include Franco Dalpozzo, Terry Giesecke, the late Ray Stowers, Neil and Minou Lamb, Gary Guy, Ross Heazlewood, Karen White and Mike Doyle. This select group meets regularly for lunch, about twice a year at the National Arboretum.

In my VETA work I also felt that I was 'making a difference'. For example, I enjoyed attending functions at which the Minister for Education and Training delivered speeches I had written. I also think I did important work in setting up the board that oversaw the development of the non-credentialed Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector in the ACT, including channelling funds into this 'Cinderella' of the Australian education system.

In the same year as my retirement in January 1999, the new *Public Service Act 1999* changed the APS classifications I'd been used to. Clerks Class 9 and 10 became, respectively, 'Executive Level 1' (EL1) and 'Executive Level 2' (EL2). Even though much public service work is humdrum routine, looking back on my time as a public servant I can say I was proud of my role as a Clerk Class 9/EL1 middle-level manager. That's because the people at that level are the intellectual powerhouse of the public service. They are the ones who undertake the sustained policy research, do the serious thinking, develop the policy options for senior management to consider, implement whatever policies are adopted, and then monitor policy progress. The middle-level managers are not the movers and shakers of the public sector; they don't get their names in the newspapers; and they don't appear before parliamentary inquiries to explain their departments' actions. They're the quintessential 'backroom boffins', but they're also the bedrock on which public sector management is founded.

My three APS children

By the time I retired all three of my children, Rosie, Tony and Katie, were also public servants; and all had married public servants. Unlike me, they saw the public service as their careers. They quickly achieved EL1 status, which meant that within a year or two of my retirement they'd all reached my level. They climbed higher by moving from department to department as they took promotions.

a) Rosemary ('Rosie')

Before Rosie and her family departed Canberra to live in the UK in November 2004, she'd variously worked in Housing, Finance and Health, often as a training officer. While working, she'd completed a B.Ed. degree in Adult Education at the University of Canberra. As well as that, she undertook the equivalent of a 'double major' in Psychology at ANU. Hoping to become a clinical psychologist, she was specialising in conflict resolution. Apart from her daytime job, she worked voluntarily as a part-time counsellor with the Canberra Conflict Resolution Service for about ten years. The CCRS is a community sector agency that seeks to settle disagreements between contending parties without their resorting to the costly and usually alienating alternative of litigation.

In England Rosie retrained as a 'special needs' teacher, specialising in helping dyslexic children to read, write and spell. She spent 15 years in that capacity at 'Meadowbrook', a small private Montessori school at Warfield, in rural Berkshire near Bracknell, about 10 kilometres from her home in Woodlands Park. Sadly, the school closed in May 2023 after some 33 years, a victim of the Covid19 pandemic. By then, however, Rosie was living in Buckie on the Moray Coast in northern Scotland, where Jon, her husband of 32 years, is the

Methodist Minister. As well as being a minister's wife, she works part-time as a tour guide for Historic Environment Scotland at Duff House, an ancient mansion 32 kilometres east of Buckie near Banff.

b) Anthony ('Tony')

Tony completed a PhD in Botany at ANU. After three years on a postdoctoral fellowship at the Silwood Park, location of Imperial College's department of Biology near Ascot in Berkshire, he returned to Canberra to work as a scientific officer with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), working on the biological control of weeds. He then moved to Health as an 'APS6' in the Office of Gene Technology Regulation. He then moved to Foreign Affairs as an 'EL1', to Prime Minister & Cabinet as an 'EL2", and then the National Health and Medical Research Council as a 'SES Band 1'. Finally, he joined the Australian Research Council (within Education). At the ARC he was the second in charge as a 'SES Band 2' with the title of 'Executive General Manager'. He left the APS two years ago to establish his own consultancy business, providing advice on research strategy, policy and funding.

c) Catherine ('Katie')

Katie also completed a PhD at ANU, in Biological Anthropology. She joined the APS as soon as she had finished her thesis. Her first APS job was on the research staff of the office of the Auditor General. She then moved to the Australian Institute of Criminology (within Attorney General's) and then to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (also Attorney General's) as a 'SES Band 1' and periodically as a long-term acting 'Band 2'. Of necessity, she became a criminologist; and criminology became her career. Over the past 25 years, as we joke, she has 'lived a life of crime'.

A high point of Katie's APS career was the award to her of the Australian Intelligence Medal (AIM) in 2022. This rare honour recognised her career contribution to criminal intelligence and criminology. The medal was presented by the Governor-General, Gen. David Hurley at Government House in May 2022, with Bruce and their three sons present.

My own 14-year career as a public servant never really went anywhere. Although I worked hard, it wasn't my main career. History was. My public service employment simply paid the mortgage. I've nevertheless been pleased to see each of my children climb the APS ladder, spread their wings and take off into professional careers in their areas of interest. I'm intensely proud of what they've each individually achieved. They've all worked hard and productively and are much respected by their colleagues.

My public servant wife

As for Margaret, like me she ended her salaried working career in an ACT Public Service position. After almost nine years as the Principal of Arawang Primary School, in mid-1997 she was 'headhunted' into the ACT Department of Education and Training central office to open a new section, 'Assessment & Reporting'. At first she was reluctant to accept the move because she had recently been elected as the president of the Primary Principals' Association; however, the Director of Education, Cheryl Vardon, told her that she must accept the position because she had been hand-picked for it. Ms Vardon visited her at Arawang to say that the department's executive believed she was the person best suited for it.

The task of 'A&R' was to devise and implement the ACT-wide system of literacy and numeracy testing. She was appointed as a teacher, a Senior Principal, the highest level to

which an ACT government schoolteacher could rise. In APS terms, she became a 'Director', i.e. head of a major section and the equivalent of a Clerk Class 10 or EL2. She held the position for two years until she followed me into retirement. In that time A&R successfully introduced a standardised scheme for systematically assessing all Year 3 and Year 5 government school students' literacy and numeracy levels. Devising such a system was contracted out to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). A&R set the parameters for the program; ACER then produced the requisite tests.

Having set up and implemented the primary school testing program in her first year in A&R, Margaret and her team were working on the secondary school program during the year when she retired, 1999. Her successor in A&R was Geoff Mason, formerly the Principal of Narrabundah College, who'd been head of Maths at Dickson College in my time there. Geoff implemented the secondary school phase of the program.

Eventually, in 2008, the A&R scheme merged into NAPLAN, i.e. the Commonwealth's 'National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy', which annually tests students at the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 levels. NAPLAN goes further than the A&R scheme did because it assesses students' attainment in reading, writing, language (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy; however, to Margaret goes the credit of having successfully introduced the first ACT-wide literacy and numeracy testing program.

Doing that was a major achievement because such a program was always highly political. The powerful teachers' union was resolutely opposed to the scheme because of its potential for exposing which schools and which teachers' classes were falling short of the ACT's average attainment levels. The union also feared that schools in suburbs of lower socioeconomic status would become stigmatised because inevitably the schools in the 'posh' suburbs would perform at higher levels. On the other hand, the parents' organisations not only supported the scheme strongly but wanted 'league tables' published, showing how the various schools compared with each other. Negotiating a path through this minefield of competing interests required managerial expertise and high-order diplomatic skills. Margaret believes that her major achievement in A&R was to maintain confidentiality, with no publicly published 'league tables' and their inevitable invidious comparisons.

Margaret won plaudits all round, from the department's executive, the schools, the union and the parent bodies, for the way she managed A&R's difficult task. Significantly, the ACT was the only jurisdiction not to experience industrial action over the introduction of system-wide testing. Her reputation spread. The Professor of Education at the University of Canberra visited her to say he wished her to become a PhD student in his faculty, her research topic being the introduction of the A&R scheme in the ACT. The Commonwealth Department of Education asked her to transfer there to open a section to implement the nation-wide literacy and numeracy testing that evolved into NAPLAN. I feel immensely proud of her accomplishment and of the recognition of her talent that she gained.

An historian

Should I call myself 'a' or 'an' historian'? Debate over which indefinite article should precede 'historian' continues. Modern usage favours 'a', but I became a practising historian at a time when 'an' was more common, in Australia and Britain if not the US. Both are correct. Because 'h' is a sounded consonant, 'a' would normally proceed it; however, because the 'h' in 'historian' is often only lightly aspirated and the stress is on the second syllable, 'stor', 'an' is also appropriate. I've been 'an historian' for so long now, that that's what I instinctively say and write.

By the time I began working in the public service I'd already published three books. I continued researching and writing them, usually part-time, throughout my years as a public

servant. I say 'usually' here because I spent two sessions away from the ACT public service writing full time. The first was in 1985–1986, when I spent almost a year as the associate editor of *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*, one of the 12 large volumes issued by the Bicentenary History Project. Jointly written by dozens of historians, mostly in university history departments, this was a hugely ambitious undertaking. My employer was Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, the publishing company formed expressly for the purpose. The second time was 1990–1993, when I worked on the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*.

The output

Below is a list of the books I either wrote or helped produce. Here I should explain that 'book authorship' includes several categories. As well as sole authorship, shared authorship is quite common. Other possibilities are 'major authorial and managerial contribution to a multi-author work' and 'authorship of a work in which the author is not named'. I've been involved in all four types. In chronological order, I claim authorship or joint-authorship of these 24 books:

(1) *Lae — Village and City* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1974)

(2) *A Thousand Graduates: Conflict in university development in Papua New Guinea 1961–1976* (Canberra, Australian National University Pacific Monographs, 1980; republished by University of Papua New Guinea, Waigani [Port Moresby], Papua New Guinea, 2012)

(3) *A Century for Australia: St John Ambulance in Australia 1883–1983* (Canberra, The Order of St John in Australia, 1983)

(4) *South Australians and St John Ambulance: A centenary history, 1885–1985* (Adelaide, St John Council for South Australia, 1985)

(5) *Australians: A Historical Dictionary* (Broadway [Sydney], Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987; Volume 7 in the 10-volume series *Australians: A Historical Library*; Ian Howie-Willis was Associate Editor for this volume)

(6) *Federation and Australia's Parliamentary System: A pictorial history* (Canberra, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1987)

(7) *St John, Ambulances and Western Australia: A centenary history 1892–1992* (Perth, St John Ambulance Australia [WA Inc.], 1992)

(8) *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, Society and Culture* (Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press–Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994; two volumes, for which Ian Howie-Willis was Senior Editor)

(9) *Land: Report of the Senate Select Committee on the Land Fund Bill* (Canberra, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1995)

(10) *Prime Ministers of Australia* (Canberra, National Museum of Australia, 1995; book in DVD format).

(11) *Canberra and the Scots: The 70th anniversary history of the Canberra Highland Society and Burns Club* (Canberra, Canberra Highland Society and Burns Club, 1997)

(12) *Reflections and Directions: A 50th anniversary history of the Commandery of the Order of St John in Western Australia 1946–1996* (Perth, St John Ambulance Australia [WA Inc.], 1997; co-authored with Edith Khangure)

(13) *The Zambuks: The uniformed first aid volunteers of St John Ambulance Australia, 1901–2002* (Canberra, St John Ambulance Australia, 2002)

(14) *A very short history of the Order of St John (emphasising its Australian history)* (Forrest [Canberra], St John Ambulance Australia, 2004)

(15) *The ACT Building & Construction, Electrotechnology and Horticulture Industries' Apprenticeship Completion and Attrition Study: Consultant's final report to the ACT Building & Construction Industry Training Fund Board* (Campbell [Canberra], ACT Building & Construction Industry Training Fund Board, 2005)

(16) *Surgeon and General: A Life of Major-General Rupert Downes 1885–1945* (Loftus [Sydney], Australian Military History Publications, Sydney, 2008)

(17) *'Dunalbyn': A Place In The Good Country* (Urrbrae, South Australia, privately published by Ian Ridgway, 2009)

(18) *Celebrating Women in St John Ambulance Australia: Our past, present and future* (Canberra, St John Ambulance Australia, 2012; co-authored & edited with Sally Hasler)

(19) *A Medical Emergency: Major-General 'Ginger' Burston and the Army Medical Service in World War II* (Newport [Sydney], Big Sky Publishing, 2012)

(20) *An Unending War: The Australian Army's struggle against Malaria, 1885–2015* (Newport [Sydney], Big Sky Publishing, 2016)

(21) *VD: The Australian Army's experience of sexually transmitted diseases during the twentieth century* (Newport [Sydney], Big Sky Publishing, 2020).

(22) *A Beacon of Hope: The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group — 140 years of eye care in Palestine & Israel, 1882–2022* (London & Canberra, Trustees of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group & St John Ambulance Australia, 2022; co-authored with Matthew Glozier & John Pearn)

(23) *Postern, gateway to New Guinea: Recapturing Lae from the Japanese in 1943* (Newport [Sydney], Big Sky Publishing, 2023)

(24) and to this list I'll add what you're now reading — *One Historian's Life: Pursuing History for 86 Years* (self-published, 2024).

For 16 of these 24 books, I was the sole author. I shared authorship of four: 12, 17, 18 & 22. I researched and wrote two, 9 & 10, but was not named as author; and for two others, 5 and 8, multi-author products, I had significant managerial responsibility while also researching and writing a major part of the text. Of the 24, all but two were broadly historical: two were encyclopaedias; nine were commissioned institutional histories; three were biographies; two were revised academic theses in history; two were military-medical histories; two comprised sets of biographical profiles; and one was a military campaign history. The two non-historical exceptions were 9, the published report of a parliamentary committee for which I was the principal research officer; and 15, a consultant's report on an inquiry into apprenticeships for which I was the consultant.

I've been pleased with this output rate. My 24 books were produced over a 49-year period, an average of one book every 2 years and 2 weeks. If I add to that the dozens of journal articles I've published and my 11 contributions to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, I can claim to have been a productive historian. I haven't been as prolific as, say, Peter Fitzsimons, who has published 41 books of history in 30 years, an average of one every nine months. Unlike Fitzsimons, however, I don't have a team of research assistants at my beck and call.

As my list suggests, enterprising historians who wish to see their writing published should be prepared to tackle whatever project might come their way. As the list above suggests, if I have the time and inclination, I'll take any project that captures my attention. Not all of them are historical, but that doesn't matter because, being a well-trained historian, I've learnt to be versatile. 'Have laptop, will travel' could be my motto. I consequently regard myself as a 'journeyman historian' — one who'll go wherever the work is and down alleyways that seem promising.

Only some of the books such historians produce will be major works. Others will be so insignificant they're hardly worth including in an author's *curriculum vitae*. In the latter category I'd include numbers 6, 9, 10, 14 and 15 of my list above. All five were diligently researched, carefully crafted and well written, and they pleased the clients who'd commissioned them; however, they're not books I boast about because each is a *parvum opus* — a very minor part of my output. A few 'minors' among the 'majors' is the reality for historians like me who accept commissions from organisations that want books written.

Very few historians can ever enjoy the luxury of dwelling in the 'Ivory Tower' — as a full-time salaried scholar in a research institute or non-teaching university history department. Most university history lecturers must teach. Like I did when I was in the salaried workforce, they fit their research and writing into their spare time. The research scholar's life is a sinecure for the privileged few. It's a life I would have loved, but I don't regret not having been able to live it. I've enjoyed living in the workaday world in a series of non-historian salaried jobs, which helped keep me grounded in everyday reality. In any case, since I retired 25 years ago, I've effectively worked full-time as a practising historian, In that time I've published ten books, including six that have been among my most important. Looking at it historiographically, retirement for me was a good career move.

St John Ambulance Australia

Seven of my books were produced for various fractions of St John Ambulance Australia. St John — the name favoured by us 'St Johnnies' — is a part of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, an international charitable organisation. The Order (again a shorthand term) is a British royal order of chivalry. It formally dates back to 1831 to an attempt to revive the English Priory of the mediaeval Knights Hospitaller, also known as the Order of the Hospital of St John, which had been suppressed by Henry VIII during the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539–1540.

The original Order came into being in Jerusalem during the late 11th century. It began as a hospice for poor, sick pilgrims maintained by Benedictine monks in a monastery near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — the chief destination for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land down the centuries. In 1113, Pope Paschal II granted the brethren status as a separate order of the church. Because of their charitable function, they were initially called 'the Hospitallers', but during the 1140s they took on an additional military role after recruiting knights to help defend the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. They were then known as the Knights Hospitaller. Like their comrades-in-arms, the Knights Templar, they became a military-monastic order dedicated to defending Christendom against its Muslim enemies.

After being expelled from the Holy Land by the resurgent forces of Islam in 1291, the Hospitallers retreated to Cyprus. In the period 1306–1310 they occupied Rhodes, which they held for the next 212 years, until driven out by the Ottoman Turks in 1522. In 1530 they were granted Malta, which they ruled for the 268 years up to 1798, when the French under Napoleon expelled them. Nowadays domiciled in Rome, they remain a Catholic order, formally titled the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta.

The parent Order rejected the purported revival of its long-defunct English Priory, but the latter continued on regardless, rebranding itself as the 'Order of St John: Anglia'. The upstart 'Order' began promoting ambulance transport work and first aid teaching during the 1870s, endeavours it carried out through its St John Ambulance offshoot. Here it enjoyed enormous success, and by the early 1880s St John Ambulance branches were springing up across Britain and in the overseas colonies, including Newcastle in NSW in 1881, Melbourne in 1883 and Adelaide in 1884. These good works attracted royal favour, to the extent that in 1888 Queen Victoria granted the Order a royal charter, making it a royal order of chivalry under her patronage. This conferred upon it official recognition, prestige and a consequent guarantee of warm support wherever it set up shop within the Empire.

My long (44-year) link with St John Ambulance Australia began in late December 1979, when I responded to an advertisement in the *Australian* newspaper. The ad. had been placed by a Canberra-based organisation calling itself 'The Priory in Australia of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem'. What the Priory wanted was an institutional history to commemorate the centenary of continuous St John Ambulance activity in Australia, 1883–1983. I had just finished revising my PhD thesis for publication, so I was looking around for another history-writing challenge.

Over the next week I wrote and mailed off an 'expression of interest' explaining who I was — a senior secondary school teacher who was a PhD graduate from ANU with one published book and another in the press. I indicated that two ANU history professors, Ken Inglis and Oscar Spate, would vouch for my academic *bona fides*. A few days later I received a phone call from a chap called Charles Campbell who said he was the St John Priory Secretary and asked if I could visit his office to discuss my response to the ad.

Charles turned out to be a physically huge chap of my own age — about 6'4" (193 cm.) tall and maybe 18 stones (252 pounds, about 114 kg.) in weight. He spoke with a cultured voice that suggested good breeding and an exclusive education. At first I wondered if he might have been upper-class English, but as I later discovered, far from it, he was the scion of Canberra's oldest and most prestigious family, the Campbells of 'Duntroon', and a product of Geelong Grammar School. He said he'd already checked my credentials with Ken Inglis, whom he knew well. Ken had vouched for me, so would I accept the commission to produce the proposed centenary history?

Charles went on to say that the Priory was offering a fee of $5000 for the delivery of a manuscript to be published in 3½ years' time, 1983, the centenary year. He would give me free access to the Priory library, which contained various books on the history of Order, ancient and modern, as well the Priory annual reports and the minute books of its various standing committees, e.g. the St John Ambulance Association (the organisation's training branch) and the St John Ambulance Brigade (its uniformed field service). I explained that because of my teaching job I couldn't work on the project full-time but would undertake my research and writing during the ten weeks of each year's school vacations. And instead of claiming the proffered fee, I'd be happy enough if the Priory could pay my travel and accommodation costs as I visited each state capital city in turn to meet the local 'St Johnnies' and undertake research in their archives.

At this point the reader needs to know that in keeping with its origins, the Order of St John uses certain monastic terminology. As in the mediaeval Order, so in the modern, a national organisation within the wider Order is called a Priory, and its head is a Prior. The administrative head of the worldwide Order, by tradition a Royal Duke, is the Grand Prior. The Monarch is the Sovereign Head. A Priory's ceremonial governing council is called a Chapter, and its members meet wearing ceremonial robes — long black capes ('mantles') emblazoned with the large Maltese Cross emblem of the Order. They also participate in an annual church service, preferably in an Anglican cathedral; and when they do, they enter and

leave the church in single file in a solemn rite called the 'capitular procession' (because it proceeds in order of rank).

In 1985 the Priory adopted the public or 'trading' name St John Ambulance Australia (SJAA). The Priory remains extant but for everyday use the public name SJAA is used. SJAA is a federal organisation. The Australian Office, formerly the Priory Office, still in Canberra, attends to matters affecting the national organisation on behalf of the national board of directors. In the capital cities are the head offices of the state and territory branches, which work on behalf of their respective governing councils. The state/territory branches use the SJAA name but differentiate between each other by adding the local name, for instance St John Ambulance Australia (NSW), St John Ambulance Australia (Victoria) and so on.

This is not the time or place for an essay on SJAA and the Order or its ambulance transport and first aid training and practice. Suffice to say that wherever the Order is active, in over 40 nations that were once within the British Empire, it is greatly respected — a 'blue chip charity' as one CEO of a major not-for-profit community sector agency once described it in an interview I conducted with him.

Anyone seriously interested in knowing more about the Order can easily do so by accessing its Wikipedia entry. Better still, they could consult my most recent book about it — number 22 in the list above — which I produced with two esteemed SJJA confrères and co-authors, Matthew Glozier and John Pearn. The book was the official 140th anniversary history of the ophthalmic hospitals that the Order runs in Palestine and Israel.

At this point I'll simply say that when I published my first St John history in 1983, I had little idea that I had begun a very substantial part-time voluntary career and lifelong commitment as a historian and member of the Order. As I sometimes say in jest to St John colleagues, I guessed that, book published, I had finished with St John; however, I didn't realise that St John had not finished with me.

What happened was that as soon as I'd published *A Century for Australia*, my first St John book, I was inveigled into accepting further St John commissions. The South Australian SJAA branch had a centenary approaching and wished to publish a commemorative history, which they asked me to produce. That resulted in number 4 above. Then the Western Australian SJAA people prevailed upon me to produce their centenary history; and that led to number 7 and subsequently number 12. By then, St John had become a way of life for me. I had become widely known in SJAA as the 'Priory Historian', although that was never a formal title.

The hazards of collaboration

A spin-off from my centenary history of St John in South Australia (number 4 above) was the book *'Dunalbyn': A Place In The Good Country* (number 17). This work was a biography of Eric Bertram Ridgway (1922–1995), the chairman of the St John Council for South Australia. Eric was an enterprising and highly successful farmer near Wolseley, close to the South-Australian-Victorian border and east of the main regional town, Bordertown. A prominent citizen from a well-known local family, he was a former shire president. He'd also had an exemplary Airforce career during World War II. He'd won the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) while flying with the Royal Airforce over Europe. His award was for successfully flying his severely damaged Beaufighter for 800 kilometres over the North Sea to Britain.

I'd interviewed Eric while researching *South Australians and St John Ambulance*, and we'd got on very well. I told him that his was such an interesting story he ought to think about writing his life story one day. I was nevertheless surprised when, about a year later, he contacted me to say, "I'm ready now to start working with you on that autobiography you want to help me write!" I'd never offered to assist him, but he seemed to think I had. It so

happened that I had no history-writing project at the time, so I agreed to discuss the matter with him further. I had to be in Adelaide in connection with my job in several weeks' time, so I agreed to take leave for several days afterwards to visit his property, 'Dunalbyn', Near the Victorian border at Wolseley, to talk further about the project. What we then agreed on was that we'd co-author the book we'd publish. We also produced a chapter plan to guide us.

Over the next couple of years I visited Eric at 'Dunalbyn' on a half-dozen occasions. On such visits we'd have long sessions planning chapters, with me asking questions and taking notes. After I'd returned to Canberra, I'd draft the chapters then return them to Eric for comment. He generally approved what I'd written but was fastidious about the chapters being correct in every minute detail before he'd sign off on them. Getting a chapter absolutely right consequently took many weeks of correspondence back and forth between us.

Eventually, perhaps mid-1989, I was able to deliver to Eric an attractively formatted, neatly typed manuscript hard-bound in the manner of a university thesis. I also gave him an electronic copy on a series of 'floppy discs'. Our agreement was that Eric would have his local printery, the *Border Chronicle* newspaper, print and bind a couple of hundred copies of the book for a total cost of about $13,000.

For various reasons, that did not happen. At first Eric said that a rural industry downturn meant that he couldn't afford publication right then. Then he got back to me to say that the *Border Chronicle* proprietor could do a more economic printing job if the manuscript was half the length. The proprietor had offered to cut it drastically to the desired length. Would I agree to that? I refused point-blank. I told Eric that we had toiled together through three years of often tortuous negotiation to get the manuscript into a form that satisfied Eric's exacting demands. I would not accordingly countenance some provincial journalist chopping back our carefully crafted handiwork.

Eric seemed to expect that I'd spend countless months continuing to work with him in reducing the manuscript to the proposed shorter length. He plainly had no idea what labours authorship entailed; nor did he seem to value the huge amount of time I'd already spent on our project. I tried explaining to him that I had other commitments, chief among which was producing the manuscript for the centenary history of St John Ambulance in Western Australia that I'd meanwhile agreed to write. Impervious to my pleas, he apparently thought he had first claim on my time and my loyalty and that I was bound to do his bidding for however long he might need me. Margaret wanted to write to Eric saying, "You've already had thousands of unpaid hours of my husband's highly skilled professional time. Would you be happy for your agriculturally skilled sons to work unpaid for someone for many months with no end in sight? If not, then recognise that that's what you're expecting my husband to do!" Such a letter was never sent, and so Eric and I parted ways amicably.

My collaboration with Eric hadn't ended well. I'd spent three years working on a good book that now looked likely to remain unpublished. Disappointed, frustrated and feeling I'd been used, I nevertheless put it behind me. It was a 'bad debt' I couldn't redeem, so I accepted it as a painful learning experience. I resolved never to get caught like that again.

Apart from exchanging Christmas cards, Eric and I had no further contact with each other. I was both surprised and saddened when, six years later in 1995, his wife Jo responded to my annual card by writing to say that Eric had died of a brain tumour several months earlier at the age of 73. He had lived only three months after the tumour was detected.

Looking back on my dealings with Eric, I realise he was being overwhelmed by events he could not control. On his watch, St John was losing its grip on the excellent statewide ambulance service it had developed in South Australia over the past 50 years. The service was increasingly beset by industrial problems as militant ambulance officer unionists agitated for the state government to take it over. Eric floundered. He was out of his depth; and perhaps for the first time in his life was powerless to manage events threatening to engulf him. The

adverse publicity for St John was so bad that eventually the Priory management in Canberra intervened to insist that the state St John branch must withdraw from it. Such a St John catastrophe irreparably damaged Eric's reputation and probably his own self-esteem. His brain tumour, I'm sure, was anxiety-induced.

Eric had also experienced problems on the home front at 'Dunalbyn'. Two family members trenchantly opposed his autobiographical project. They saw this as a costly, egotistical self-indulgence that would prove embarrassing for the wider Ridgway clan. They avoided contact with me during my visits to 'Dunalbyn'; and when we did meet their hostility was obvious. Eric, I now appreciate, had good reasons for not publishing our manuscript.

In 2008, 13 years after Eric's death, I was much surprised when his younger brother, Ian, rang me from Adelaide. He said he had inherited a sheaf of Eric's papers that looked like a manuscript for an autobiography. Did I know anything about this document? It so happened that I was due in Adelaide several weeks later for that year's national St John Ambulance convention, so I agreed to visit Ian afterwards to examine his papers. When I saw them, I realised to my horror that Ian had a bowdlerised version of the manuscript I'd toiled on — with my name removed from the title page, and no reference anywhere to the work I'd done. It was, I guessed, Eric's own amateurish and authorially dishonest attempt to cut back our manuscript so that the *Border Chronicle* proprietor could publish it.

I promised Ian that when I returned to Canberra I'd send him a USB flash-drive containing the original manuscript. I duly did that. A few days later he phoned me again, saying he'd just read the entire manuscript in one sitting. He thought it was superb — not only Eric's biography but a family history as well, a history of the 'Dunalbyn' property, too, and in effect also an account of farming life in the Tatiara region where 'Dunalbyn' is located. He was so fascinated he'd stayed up all night reading it. He now wished to self-publish the book. Would I permit that? I agreed readily.

Ian then arranged with a printer friend to print out and bind several copies, for which he designed a dust-jacket. He also came up with an ingenious 'print-on-demand' scheme. Prospective readers could pay $50 in advance for a copy, which would then be printed, bound and despatched to them. He probably managed to sell several dozen copies that way.

We later had a splendid book launch in the Bordertown RSL Hall mid-2009. Margaret and I drove all the way to Bordertown for it, a two-day trip. It was a huge success. A hundred people crowded into the hall. The extended Ridgway family attended in force. Cr. Jan MacLellan, Eric's successor as the Wolseley representative on the Tatiara District Council, did the launching. Dozens paid their $50 and signed up for copies. As the champagne flowed freely, I was kept busy signing 'With the co-author's best wishes' slips that Ian had printed. The *Border Chronicle* reported it all at length and later published a glowing book review. And so my Ridgway biography was eventually published — 20 years later than originally intended! On our way home to Canberra Margaret and I visited the Bordertown cemetery to place a bouquet on Eric's grave.

Book-launches

At this point I'll discuss book-launches, which are among the happiest occasions in any historian's working life. Authors love having their books officially launched. Apart from whatever royalties they might garner, that's their chief reward. It's their chance for 15 minutes of fame after all the stress of research, writing and revising, selecting and captioning maps and photos, working with a copy-editor to bring the manuscript up to publication standard, monitoring the work of the book designer, proof-reading the page-proofs, and compiling and checking the index.

Sometimes the author will not see the printed book until the publisher hands over a copy at the book launch. For me, the nearest experience to seeing one of my books for the first time was to hold my three children and seven grandchildren in my arms soon after their birth. One feels an enormous sense of joy, relief and pride in beholding the living result of a miraculous feat of creation!

The release of a new book by a publisher isn't always marked by a launch, however. Publishers are wary of such events. From experience, they've learnt that launches are expensive events that don't necessarily result in sufficient book sales to recoup the costs. Many people who attend will gladly quaff the free champagne and gobble the expensive comestibles but resolutely keep their wallets in their pockets. As well as that, the books on display tend to disappear unless a security guard has been hired to watch over them.

Of my books, 13 had launching ceremonies — numbers 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 & 22 on my list. Two of them were launched twice. *A Century for Australia* was first launched in Melbourne in 1983 by the St John Priory Chancellor, Sir John Young, and then again in Canberra by Professor Ken Inglis, whose original commendation had persuaded Charles Campbell to commission me. *A Beacon of Hope* was splendidly launched in London at the Charterhouse by the Lord Prior of the Order, Professor Mark Compton, in June 1922 and a month later equally grandly in Canberra at Government House by the Governor-General, Gen. David Hurley, who is also the Prior of the Australian Priory. I couldn't attend the London launch because I was recovering from surgery, but I was well enough to be at the Canberra ceremony. On behalf of my two co-authors I made the 'speech-in-reply' to Gen. Hurley's launching speech. It was one of the most joyous ceremonies I've ever attended.

Some launches are grander than others. The most spectacular I've been involved in was that of *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, which took place in the Great Hall of Parliament House here in Canberra. The then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, delivered the launching speech to a crowd of many hundreds. The vast hall seemed to be packed out.

All my major St John histories have had gala official book-launching ceremonies. I've just described those for *A Century for Australia* and *A Beacon of Hope*. I forget who launched *South Australians and St John Ambulance* in Adelaide in 1985; but I well remember Sir Paul Hasluck, the former Governor-General and Prior, launching *St John, Ambulances and Western Australia* in Perth in 1992. Dr Don Webb, the 'Commandery Lieutenant' or head of the Western Australian Commandery of the Order, launched *Reflections and Directions* in Perth in 1998. Professor Villis Marshall, the Priory Chancellor and former Chief Commissioner of the St John Ambulance Brigade, launched *The Zambuks* in Sydney in 2002; and Dr Neil Conn, the next Priory Chancellor, launched *Celebrating Women in St John Ambulance Australia* in 2012, again in Sydney.

In mentioning these St John books, I must express my deep gratitude to two of my closest St John friends — Ian Kaye-Eddie and John Pearn, who are each enterprising St John historians themselves. Ian is the co-author of *Order from Chaos: A Century of the St John Ambulance Service in Western Australia 1918–2018* (2023); and John is the co-author of *First in First Aid: The History of St John Ambulance in Queensland* (1998). Both of these works are landmark publications. Ian and John have always encouraged me in my historiographical endeavours. Their respect for my work as an historian served to strengthen my faith in my own abilities. That in turn helped me to renew my efforts by trying harder and aiming higher.

Awards

One reward for being the SJAA 'Priory Historian' was admission into the Order's select membership. Membership is by invitation and cannot be applied for. It is achieved through

distinguished service to the Order. Not everyone who joins SJAA as a first aid instructor, an ambulance officer, an administrator, or a volunteer in the uniformed field service will be recruited into the Order. Membership must be earnt through sustained conspicuous service.

Like other orders of chivalry, e.g. the Order of Australia, the Order of the British Empire etc., it has hierarchical grades of membership, as follows:

Grade 1	Bailiff (male) & Dame (female) Grand Cross (postnominal GCStJ)
Grade 2	Knight & Dame (KStJ & DStJ); Knights/Dames may be 'of Justice' (if armigerous, i.e. entitled to display a coat-of-arms) or 'of Grace' (if non-armigerous
Grade 3	Commander (CStJ)
Grade 4	Officer (OStJ)
Grade 5	Member (MStJ).

For people who remain long enough in SJAA, promotion up through the grades is common. I'm an example of that. I was admitted into the Order at Grade 4, OStJ, in 1984, in recognition of my work on my first St John book (no. 3 above). I was subsequently promoted to Grade 3, CStJ, in 1993 for my efforts in producing centenary histories for St John in South Australia and Western Australia (nos. 4 & 7 above). Finally, I was promoted to Grade 2, KStJ ('of Grace'), in 2005 for my more recent contributions, which included the books numbered 13 & 14 above, my efforts in establishing the vigorous St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia (of which I was the foundation secretary and editor), and my service 2003–2012 as the Priory Librarian, i.e. the adviser to the SJAA Board of Directors on matters relating to the Order's history and heritage. I'm unlikely ever to be promoted to Grade 1, GCStJ, because the chief qualification is distinguished high-level international service to the Order's Grand Council, its London-based worldwide governing body. That's a criterion I cannot and will now never meet.

My other St John rewards include the Service Medal of the Order with five bars. The medal is awarded after 15 years' continuous service, with a bar added for every additional five years. I'm due for my sixth bar next year.

More prominently, in the 2002 Australia Day official honours list I was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in recognition of my work as a practising historian. At that stage, five of the 13 books I'd published were SJAA-related, so book-writingwise St John was my strong suit. I later discovered that the two people who'd nominated me for an Order of Australia award were my Western Australian St John friends, Ian Kaye-Eddie and Faye Morgan.

Although the OAM is the lowest-ranking award in the Order of Australia's four-tier group of honours, I was very happy at the honour and public recognition it represented. What pleased me most about my OAM was not so much the honour it conferred, and the recognition it gave me as an historian, but the thought that two friends valued my historian's output so highly that they'd gone to the trouble of nominating me. The nomination process is complex and time-consuming, so that anyone who wishes to nominate a friend will have much work to do.

Four of the above awards — OStJ, CStJ, KStJ and OAM — entailed trips to 'Yarralumla', the residence of the Governor-General, for presentation ceremonies. The Governor-General of the day, successively Sir Ninian Stephen, the Hon. W.G. (Bill) Hayden, the Rt. Rev. Peter Hollingworth and Maj.-Gen. Michael Jeffery, officiated. Margaret accompanied me on each of these occasions but for the OAM, Rosie, Tony and Katie were all present; and so it was a happy family event.

I was so grateful for my OAM that I decided to 'give something back' by nominating various worthy friends for Order of Australia awards. Making such nominations has become something of a minor hobby for me. I've now been involved in at least 15 nominations, either

as a nominator or as a referee who provides comment on others' nominations. Among my successes have been my fellow historian, the late Dr Gordon Briscoe AO (1938–2023); my best man, the late Tony Irvine AM (1937–2008); my brother-in-law, Dr Tom Roberts OAM; Carol Flynn OAM, the wife of my oldest Canberra friend, Tom Flynn; my onetime school mate, Dr John Taylor AM; and my SJAA colleagues, Dr Allan Mawdsley OAM, the late Mervyn Goodall OAM (1928–2017), Dr Harry Oxer AM, Ian Kaye-Eddie AM and Dr Edith Khangure OAM.

I didn't at first realise how much effort is required in submitting an Order of Australia nomination; however I soon learned that a nominator must carefully research and write a persuasive case for the nominee's award. Even when one knows the nominee well, that takes time and effort. The nominator must also find persuasive referees, who will strengthen the case by informed comment about the nominee's strengths. The referees are critical. Choose the 'wrong' ones, and the case is doomed. 'Wrong' can mean they aren't enthusiastic. If they aren't, they're likely to damn the candidate with faint praise.

Unfortunately, not all my nominations have been successful. Inexplicably, three nominees whom I regarded as eminently worthy candidates were denied awards. At the time I was much displeased because I wouldn't have gone to the trouble of nominating them if I hadn't thought they stood an excellent chance of receiving an award. Researching and writing a nomination submission takes me the equivalent of three weeks' very full-time work; and so it's a great disappointment when one's candidate doesn't 'get up'. I still think my three 'rejectees' merited an award. Fortunately, they never knew they'd been nominated because the process is strictly confidential.

I've had two other awards for my work as an historian. In 2019 I became a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, which entitles me to include the postnominals FRHS after my name. I had to apply for this honour, which entailed submitting an account of my work as an historian and naming another Fellow as a referee. The process for admitting new Fellows is rigorous; and so I can be sure my application wouldn't have been approved if my qualifications hadn't passed critical scrutiny. I sought the coveted 'FRHS' for 'political' reasons rather than vanity. At the time I was bidding for a commission from the London-based Trustees of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group to produce the book numbered 22 in the list above. They knew little about me other than that I was an Australian historian in faraway Canberra. Being able to say I was a 'FRHS' helped convince them that I could be entrusted with the project.

The second award was the 'John & Ruth Kerr Medal for Distinction in History' in 2022. This medal is presented annually and jointly by the Royal Historical Society of Queensland. It goes to professional historians who, in the opinion of the RHSQ and PHA(Q), have significantly advanced the cause of Australian historical studies. Many distinguished historians have been Kerr Medal recipients, so I felt greatly honoured to have joined their select company. My friend John Pearn nominated me, but I'm told the awards committee unanimously agreed that I should receive it. The list of previous recipients reads like a roll-call of Australia's best-known historians. I feel deeply honoured by my inclusion among them. Margaret and I travelled up to Brisbane for the award ceremony in March 2023. We were joined by our granddaughter Heidi, my brother David, his daughter Julie and her daughter Takisha. That made it a happy family occasion.

(Incidentally, John Pearn is the 2024 Kerr Medal awardee. As well as being an eminent physician, he's a professionally trained historian, with a M.Phil. research degree in History. John has published innumerable books, pamphlets and articles on a wide range of historical topics, including botanical history, military history, medical history, biography, and the history of numismatics and philately. His most recent magnum opus has been a very hefty

tome, *Doctors for the World: A history of the Faculty of Medicine of The University of Queensland* (2023).

Aboriginal History

One of the spin-offs of my work for *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* was a two-year stint, 2000–2001, as the part-time managing editor of the ANU-based interdisciplinary journal *Aboriginal History*. The journal, an academic refereed publication, had been founded in 1975 in my old department, Pacific & South-East Asian History. Its first volume appeared in 1977. Its progenitors were a small group of anthropologists and historians. As well as in history and anthropology, it publishes articles on archaeology, linguistics, demography, law, politics and other disciplines within the ever-expanding field of Aboriginal Studies.

The period 1975–1977 was my time in the department, but I had never heard tell of its new journal. I'm not now surprised by that. I was a very lowly member of the department; intradepartmental communications were never its strength; I wasn't often there (I worked among the archives, in libraries, at home and in PNG); and in any case I was a 'Papua New Guineanist', so others in the know possibly thought I wouldn't be interested.

Managed by a board of directors, *Aboriginal History* is produced by its own dedicated company, Aboriginal History Inc. Nowadays the journal is based in the Australian Centre for Indigenous History within the Research School of Social Sciences, but by the time I took over the editorship it had changed locations several times. At the beginning of 2000, the Professor of History in the ANU School of General Studies, Ann Curthoys, offered the journal a new home. Knowing about me and my editorial skills from my friend Gordon Briscoe, a director, the board invited me to take over the honorary editorship. Inducements were an office in Ann's department, membership of her staff as a 'Visiting Fellow' (i.e. an unpaid academic) and the usual computer, email and photocopying facilities.

Although I knew there'd be much work to do with little reward, I accepted the position quite happily. Doing so enabled me to achieve one unfulfilled ambition. At last I could claim to be an academic historian, even if non-teaching, part-time and non-salaried.

I was responsible to a large board of directors, about 20 mainly senior academics with careers in Aboriginal Studies. I don't remember all their names, and I didn't actually meet them all because some didn't attend meetings, but I became friendly with most of them.

Apart from Gordon, those I got to know best were the chairman, Peter Read (an eminent historian who had coined the phrase 'Stolen Generations' to describe Aboriginal children removed from their parents); Ingereth Macfarlane (a PhD student in anthropology who had previously been a medical student); Isabel McBryde (the retired professor emerita of archaeology at ANU and a towering pioneer of the discipline in Australia); and the late Luise Hercus (1926–2018, a German-born linguist and one of the great pioneers of Australian linguistics). I already knew two other directors quite well: Geoff Gray, whom I'd met in PNG 30 years earlier and who was now the official historian at AIATSIS; and the late Niel Gunson (1930–2023), an Associate Professor in Pacific & South-East Asian History and the journal's co-founder and first chairman.

I briefed the board thoroughly at our bimonthly meetings. They supported me strongly because they could see that I was dragging the journal from a morass in which it had become mired. It really was in a mess when I took over. A backlog of three annual journals were 'in the pipeline' awaiting publication and none had been released for several years. 'Logjam' rather than 'backlog' is the more appropriate term. Each edition had a notional editor who was a board member. The various editors were dithering around, seemingly unable to get their editions completed and published. They apparently didn't know what the others were doing or where they were on the pathway to publication. So that the directors would know

what was happening, I drew up a large Excel spreadsheet showing what articles were in each edition and what stage each had reached; then I concentrated on clearing the backlog, edition by edition, one at a time.

In many cases the delay was a result of waiting for referees' reports on particular articles. Much shilly-shallying was occurring as referees, mostly specialist academics, made up their minds about the quality of the articles they were reviewing. In some cases protracted three-way correspondence was in progress between editor, referee and author over changes the reviewers were insisting upon. To hasten the reviewers, I wrote to them saying that unless they could agree to the changes the authors had already made, I'd assign their articles to someone else to review. If they didn't respond promptly and satisfactorily, I wrote again to say they'd taken far too long, their services were accordingly no longer required, and another reviewer had been appointed instead. I didn't tell them that I was the substitute reviewer.

My criteria for approving articles were simple. If I liked an article and thought the author had done a fair job, I accepted it. No finickity scholastic quibbling over whether it met the journal's high academic standards! If I thought changes were necessary, I simply exercised 'editorial discretion' by making them myself. Within several months we'd published the longest overdue edition. To celebrate, we ran a successful book-launch in the Tjabal Centre, the on-campus indigenous students' study facility where the board met. I then turned my attention to the next edition in line and the next.

Within two years I'd cleared the logjam. I only ever had to reject one article, a snide, anti-Aboriginal broadside by a chap who seemed to be a spokesman for the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. The 'rejection slip' I sent him upset him greatly. He rang me to say what a snivelling, contemptible publication *Aboriginal History* was. I responded by saying that neither he nor the NTCA could expect to use the journal as a mouthpiece for broadcasting their pejorative views about Aborigines.

By the end of the second year, 2001, the publication schedule had returned to normal. We were due to publish that year's edition on time and the next year's edition was in train for publication in its designated calendar year. I could see that I'd fulfilled my historical role for *Aboriginal History*, and I was busy publishing a book of my own — *The Zambuks*. I accordingly handed over my duties to my successor, Ingereth Macfarlane, who was eager to accumulate 'runs on the board' to enhance her CV and further her career. She held the position for the next 19 years, until 2020, by which time she had earnt her PhD and established herself as an historian specialising in Aboriginal history. The journal, still extant, published its 46th successive annual volume in 2023.

Military history

Often the way of historical research projects is that that one leads into another, and sometimes in unexpected directions. That happened with my book-writing career 21 years ago in 2003 when I inadvertently entered the field of military history. The year before that I'd published my centenary history of the St John Ambulance Brigade in Australia, *The Zambuks* (number 14 above), and was casting around for my next major project. One day, about September 2003, an elderly lady called Valerie Howse (1917–2013) phoned me with a request. Would I write the biography of her father, the late Maj.-Gen. Rupert Downes (1885–1945)? She explained that she'd asked my friend John Pearn to take on this task, but he'd neatly flick-passed her request by suggesting me instead. I knew who Rupert Downes was because although he'd died 58 years earlier, he still held the Australian record — 25 years — for time spent as a St John Ambulance Brigade District Commissioner. I asked Valerie to let me think it over for a few days.

After discussing the matter with Margaret, who thought it was a good idea because it might lead to other things, I rang Valerie to say I'd take on the job. I explained that I wasn't interested in a fee, but would expect full cooperation from the family, including access to family history records. She suggested that we discuss the project over lunch at the exclusive Commonwealth Club, above Lake Burley Griffin in Yarralumla.

The lunch was a great success. Margaret came with me, and Valerie brought along two of her three sons, Robert (a lawyer) and Jonathan (a businessman). (I later got to know the third, Charles, a medical practitioner, as well.) I agreed to start work right away, beginning by making my way through a large compendium of family history documents compiled by the family historian, Valerie's niece in Melbourne, Susan Grant. For a time Valerie half-jokingly and somewhat patronisingly referred to me as 'My Scribe'; but then as I began turning out the chapters, she realised that I was an independent and authoritative scholar who didn't answer to her or anyone else for what I was producing.

Researching and writing the book, *Surgeon and General* (number 16 above), took much of the next three years. Although it was a biography, it was essentially military history because Rupert Downes had spent most of his life as a senior officer in the Australian Army Medical Corps. I applied myself diligently to the task, undertaking many hours of research in the Australian War Memorial research centre, the National Archives of Australia, the National Library and online. I made many visits to talk with Valerie, her older sister in Melbourne, Rosemary Campbell, and Rosemary's daughter, Susan Grant. I also flew to Cairns to visit Rupert Downes's grave and see the place at nearby Machans Beach, where he had been killed in a disastrous plane crash. I read all Downes's voluminous wartime diaries, correspondence and many publications, and what others had written about him. The Downes-Howse-Campbell-Grant extended family enthusiastically supported my efforts, and consequently became my firm friends. The publication of the book was subsidised by the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU), which also gave me a small grant to help defray my expenses. We held a grand book-launch in the Officers' Mess at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. John Pearn, who wrote the Foreword to the book, performed the launching ceremony.

Surgeon and General led me directly to my next project, a biography of Downes's friend, colleague and sometime rival, Maj.-Gen. Sir Samuel Roy ('Ginger') Burston (1888–1960), who succeeded Downes as the Army's Director-General of Medical Services (DGMS), i.e. chief of the Army Medical Corps. Writing about Downes helped me see that Burston, too, deserved a biography, so I set about producing one. Like Downes, Burston had been a St John Ambulance Brigade District Commissioner, in South Australia, and he also went on to become the inaugural Australian Chief Commissioner. As with the Downes book, the one on Burston was not only a biography but a military-medical history. Again, I secured an Army history research grant to support the project.

I began by contacting Burston's two surviving sons and two of his grandsons, who all approved my endeavours and provided whatever help they could. The older of Burston's sons, Sir Sam Burston II (1915–2015), proved very helpful by giving me a large box of his father's official wartime correspondence, a cache of 22 large files. This turned out to be a major source for the book I wrote, *A Medical Emergency*, number 19 in the list above. Sir Sam's instructions were that when I'd finished with the files, I should deposit them at the Australian War Memorial, which is always eager to acquire such material. I duly tried to do that; however, the AWM would not accept the files without a letter of approval from Sir Sam's next of kin. This was a grazier in Victoria who peremptorily refused my request to pass the files to the AWM.

The grazier, an imperious person who had never known Sir Sam's father, took the view that historians, like journalists, are interfering busybodies; accordingly, the records should not

pass into the public domain, where historians could get at them, but must remain securely within the family. In vain, I pleaded that the material comprised copies of official correspondence rather than intimate personal papers, and that Sir Sam's express wish was that the files should go to the most appropriate repository — the AWM. Reluctantly, I parcelled up the files and sent them to the grazier. I have no idea what then became of them, but my fear was that they'd be stored in some outbuilding. If that's what happened, the chances are that they'll eventually be eaten by silverfish, become a nest for mice or be reduced to ashes in a bushfire.

The Burston project led to my next, a history of the Australian Army's experience of malaria. This was published in 2016 as *An Unending War*, number 20 above. I chose this topic because my work on Burston had shown me that the most serious problem he'd dealt with as DGMS during World War II was a series of catastrophic malaria epidemics among the troops fighting in Papua New Guinea. By late 1942 malaria was threatening to shut down the Army's campaigns there. With enterprising pharmacological and entomological research, and strict adherence to the 'malaria discipline' recommended by the Army's malariologists, the Allied forces eventually beat malaria by keeping the disease to minimal levels. That in turn helped them defeat the Japanese, who never learned to control malaria and accordingly died from it in many thousands.

The book was launched in the Hellenic Club here in Canberra in September 2016. Rosie, Tony and Katie organised this event and each spoke eloquently in generous praise of their historian dad. The main speech was delivered by my ever-faithful St John confrère, John Pearn, who'd written the Foreword. (John has actually contributed the Forewords to all five of my military histories.)

Personally, one great benefit of the malaria project was the contact I had with the Army Malaria and Infectious Diseases Institute at the Gallipoli Barracks in Enoggera, Brisbane. I became friends with the Institute's two great successive directors, Professors Karl Rieckmann and Dennis Shanks. As well as being a leading malariologist, Dennis is also an outstanding military-medical historian who contributes elegant historical articles to prestigious international journals. We have remained in contact with each other to our mutual historiographical advantage.

An Unending War took me to my next project, a study of the Army's experience of venereal diseases (VD) and the book numbered 21 above. VD, nowadays called STD (sexually transmitted diseases), is a sordid subject and has few heroes. It is nevertheless militarily important and therefore worthwhile tackling. What prompted my interest was my realisation that, devastating though malaria had been in most of the Army's overseas deployments, gonorrhoea and syphilis had always been much more significant as a cause of troop wastage.

My book, *VD*, was researched, written and published with financial aid from the AAHU, as my Downes, Burston and malaria books had been. It was released in September 2020 at the height of the Covid19 emergency. The shut-downs at the time prevented us from conducting the usual book-launch. Despite that, I've been pleased that I tackled and successfully completed a difficult project involving a sensitive and potentially controversial topic.

The latest military history I've published, *Operation Postern* (number 23 above), is about the recapture of Lae from the Japanese in 1943. It's my homage to the city where my historian's journey began 56 years ago. As with my previous military histories, the AAHU obligingly provided a research grant. Its main purpose was to enable me to return to Lae to visit sites important in the campaign. I intended spending several weeks in and around Lae during August-September 2020; however, Covid19-induced travel restrictions in both Australia and Papua New Guinea prevented that. Margaret, Rosie, Tony and Katie were

looking forward to accompanying me to revisit our old haunts. Great was their disappointment when we had to call off the family excursion. The book probably didn't suffer much by our not trekking around ancient battlegrounds. I remember them very well from our years in Lae; and in any case Google Maps 'satellite view' gives me a good idea of what they now look like.

Unlike other campaign histories from the Pacific War in Papua New Guinea, *Operation Postern* tries to include the local Papua New Guinean village communities on whose land the war was fought. All previous accounts of the war in PNG see it as a two-way contest between the Japanese and the Australian-American Allies. My argument is that there was always a 'third party' — the villagers.

So far, my *Op. Postern* is reviewing well, which pleases me greatly. We didn't conduct a book-launch because the book was released only a fortnight before Christmas; and by the time the New Year had been and gone the matter seemed rather passé.

Meanwhile, I've been focussing on my next military-medical project. The working title indicates its nature: 'Shell-Shock: The impact of disabling mental illness in the Australian Army during World War I and afterwards'. It's a huge and distressing topic. One aspect of it that pleases me greatly is that while the British Army executed 'cowards' and 'deserters', who in most cases would have been suffering from what we would now recognise as acute post-traumatic stress disorder, the Australian Army resolutely refused to execute its own.

Researching and writing a manuscript

People who've never had to produce a major university thesis or write a book sometimes ask me how I go about researching a topic and then writing a book-length manuscript about it. Probably most historians will tackle their topics their own way, so there's no single set of guidelines that will fit all cases.

The way I go about it is generally to think about the subject for a while, and then decide that I really do wish to embark again on the tortuous, exhausting journey that book-writing often turns out to be.

After I've committed myself to the project, I do some background reading to see what the topic parameters are. I'll also undertake a 'literature review', making a list of the sources likely to be helpful. For example, with book number 22 above, *A Beacon of Hope* (the commemorative history of the eye hospitals that the Order of St John has been developing in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Holy Land since 1882), my list of sources included these:

- Porter, Roy S. *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (1997)
- the 'Ophthalmology' entry in *Wikipedia* (online encyclopaedia)
- the Hospitallers' reports within the *Annual Reports* of St John Ambulance Australia (i.e. of the officer responsible for the Eye Hospital)
- the Eye Hospital section within the *Annual Reports* of the Most Venerable Order of St John
- *Jerusalem Scene*, the newsletter of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem
- W.K.R. Bedford & Richard Holbeche, *The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem: Being a History of the English Hospitallers of St. John, Their Rise and Progress* (1902)
- Edwin J. King & Harry Luke, *The Knights of St John in the British Realm* (1967)
- Guy Stair Sainty, *The Orders of St John: The History, Structure, Membership and Modern Role of the Five Hospitaller Orders of St John* (1991)
- Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John* (1999).

When I'm generally familiar with the subject matter, I produce a chapter plan, a series of broadly chronological chapter headings showing how I'll develop my manuscript. For instance, here's the preliminary chapter plan I drafted for *A Beacon of Hope*. Because I was researching and writing this book with two co-authors, John Pearn & Matthew Glozier, the first part of the plan was a 'division of labour' — a 'who does what' summary showing which co-author would be responsible for the various parts of the book. We agreed that the Eye Hospital's history could be conveniently divided into three periods, with each of us taking responsibility for one of the parts, as follows:

Part 1: Ian Howie-Willis to research and write ***the Early period*** — pre-1882 (origin of the Order & the Order's interest in establishing an eye hospital), through the hospital's foundation and World War I to the establishment of the British League of Nations Mandate in Palestine in 1920

Part 2: John Pearn to work on ***the Middle period*** — between the two World Wars (i.e. 1920–1939), World War II, creation of the state of Israel, the first Arab-Israeli war, and Arab–Israeli conflicts during the 1940s–50s, and the impact of these events on the hospital's development

Part 3: Matthew Glozier to cover ***the Later period*** — from the opening of the 'new' (present) Hospital in Sheikh Jarrah in 1960 to the present (2022), including the effects of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, 1973 and the first and second Intifadas.

Each of the co-authors then drafted his own chapter plan to indicate how his part of the book would be developed. My chapter plan for Part 1, 'the Early period', looked like this:

Chapter 1: Development of ophthalmology during the 19th century; and a historical outline of the Orders of St John.

Chapter 2: Ideas of Sir Edmund Lechmere (secretary-general of the Order) for an Eye Hospital in Jerusalem, for both humanitarian & strategic-political considerations.

Chapter 3: The diplomacy between London, Istanbul & Jerusalem to bring the hospital into being.

Chapter 4: The foundation and first two years of the Hospital, including the efforts of the first two Wardens, Drs Waddell & Ogilvie.

Chapter 5: Establishment of the Hospital's structures, management & routines in the period 1882–1900.

Chapter 6: The Hospital's place within the imperial Ottoman Empire's health care systems; and its relationship with other hospitals in the region.

Chapter 7: The Hospital 1900–1915, after which British-Ottoman imperial hostilities during WW1 forced its closure until the capture of Jerusalem by the British in 1917.

Chapter 8: Damage to the hospital by the retreating Ottomans; and its reconstruction & reopening under General Allenby's orders during 1917–1918.

Chapter 9: The reopened Hospital 1917–1920, when the British Mandate of Palestine was established under League of Nations auspices.

Chapter 10: Retrospective review and assessment of the work & achievements of the Hospitallers & Wardens during the period 1882–1920.

Once I had decided what the subject matter of chapter would be, I set about summarising what each chapter would contain. The summary of Chapter 1 in my part of the book was as follows:

Chapter 1 Eye Hospitals and the Blind; and the Orders of St John

This introductory chapter will begin by looking at Biblical references to blindness in both its physiological and metaphorical contexts, including Jesus's miracles of healing and their importance in Christian tradition. The chapter will then trace the development of ophthalmology as a separate medical specialisation during the 19th century, including the establishment of specialised eye hospitals in London, Paris, New York, Sydney and Melbourne. The chapter will also set out the background to the foundation of the Most Venerable Order of St John in 1831; and the Order's relationship to other Orders of St John (notably the Catholic Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, and the three *Johanniter* Orders of Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden). It will also show how these present-day Orders of St John evolved from the original mediaeval Knights Hospitaller.

Both the chapter headings and chapter summaries were 'indicative' only. The chapter plan had to be flexible. As I learned more about the subject through further reading, research and discussion with people who knew about it, I modified it. Some of my chapters were combined; other chapters were added to take account of newly emerging information.

Once I had a chapter plan, I had a fair idea of what directions my research should take, and of what primary and secondary resources I should view.

The great benefit of a chapter plan is that it provides focus for what must be written. If something is in the plan, I'll write about it. If it isn't, it'll probably be irrelevant; and if that's the case it must be ignored, no matter how tempted I might feel to go off at a tangent exploring fascinating topics that are extraneous to the writing task at hand.

When I have consulted a wide range of sources and have produced my chapter plan, I am ready to embark on my archival research. For *A Beacon of Hope* the main primary source was a set of 18 archival boxes of old Eye Hospital documents in the Library of the Most Venerable Order of St John at St John's Gate in Clerkenwell, London. To access them, I spent five days in the Library in August 2019 undertaking intensive research. Using my laptop, my mobile phone's camera and a hand-held electronic scanner, I made a record of all the documents likely to be relevant. After I'd completed that phase of my research, I flew to Jerusalem for four days of research, interviews and discussion at the Eye Hospital. I also visited sites in and around the old walled city that had been important in the hospital's history. My co-authors later made similar visits to St John's Gate and the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

The notes and copies of documents that I made formed the basic material for the bulk of my part of the book. By the time I'd returned to Canberra I was ready to start drafting my chapters. The writing phase then began.

Producing the manuscript chapter by chapter lasted for about six months of intensive daily writing sessions at my computer during 2020. As Margaret remarks, at such times I remain 'glued' to my swivel-chair as the writing proceeds.

A 'typical' chapter in one of my books will usually be about 20,000 words long and will extend across about 30 A4 pages of single-line spaced Times New Roman 12-point text — the same format as this chapter in my memoirs. It usually takes me two or three weeks to complete a chapter. That time will include locating and captioning suitable illustrations.

After a while, each chapter will take on a life of its own, dragging me where it wishes to go next. As that happens, the chapter develops a momentum of its own. As I go, I add in the numbered end-notes and compile the bibliography — fiddly tasks that impede the rate of

writing. When the chapter is finished, I print it out and then proof-read it, making whatever amendments might seem necessary.

For each of my books I usually have a panel of about eight chapter-reviewers, friends with expertise in the subject, a good command of English and/or plain common sense. As I turn out the chapters, I send them to the reviewers for comment. Collectively, my panel members invariably suggest worthwhile improvements. In the case of *A Beacon of Hope*, we had a 'steering group' of six Eye Hospital Trustees who read and commented on all our chapters as we produced them, and then went through the whole-of-book manuscript after we'd compiled it.

Eventually, when all the chapters, introductory pages and appendices had been written, reviewed and revised, we had a manuscript to send our publisher, which for *A Beacon of Hope* was the publications officer in the Canberra headquarters of St John Ambulance Australia, Gabrielle ('Gabi') Lhuede. At that point, the project moved from the writing to the exciting production phase, when a raw manuscript will be transformed into a published book. First, Gabi took on the task of copy editor to ensure that the manuscript was not only immaculate but conformed to the publishing house style-guide. As a book designer, Gabi then fitted the text and illustrations into the desired format; and an index was added by a professional indexer. Finally, the typeset work went off to the printer in Sydney. As a co-author, I then waited in mounting anticipation for about nine months until I received an advance copy of the book, hand delivered by a courier. As always, that was truly a moment of supreme elation!

Finally, *A Beacon of Hope* was launched twice — first in London in June 2022, then in Canberra at Government House a month later. I couldn't attend the London launch (because I'd just had surgery), but the Canberra launch, by the Governor-General, Gen. David Hurley, was a memorable gala occasion. It was organised by the ever-obliging Kylie Seidel, the Priory Manager for St John Ambulance Australia, who also arranges the Order of St John investitures at Government House.

My best books

I'm sometimes asked what my best book has been. It's an impossible question to answer, because there's always a subsidiary question, 'Best in terms of what?' Each book has its own special merits that set it apart from others. *A Thousand Graduates*, my revised and published PhD thesis, for instance, will be of most interest to people anxious to know more about Papua New Guinea's early university development. Such readers regard it as a pioneering work.

A Century for Australia, my first St John book, was also a pioneering work. It was the first of more than a dozen major commemorative Australian St John histories published in the meantime; and it was the inspiration for many that followed.

The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia won more prestigious awards than most books published in Australia over the past 40 years, but I can't be sure how often people read it nowadays. Those seeking encyclopaedia-type information are more likely to consult *Wikipedia* or 'google' for whatever they want rather than go to the trouble of finding *The Encyclopaedia* in a library somewhere.

Surgeon and General and *A Medical Emergency*, my two military-medical biographies, are excellent books in every respect. Carefully crafted, they are in effect histories of the Army Medical Service during and between the two world wars, as reflected in the lives of two of its wartime leaders.

My two military-medical monographs, *An Unending War* on malaria and *VD* on sexually transmitted diseases, are both meticulous accounts of the Army's historical

experience in managing lethal diseases that have caused huge troop wastage. Each also probed Army health matters that hadn't previously been historically investigated.

If I were required to name my own present favourite, it would be *Operation Postern*. That's because it not only deals competently with one of the most crucial offensives of the Pacific War, it's a 'love song' to a region that was vitally important to my family and our subsequent careers. It also takes Australian military history in a new direction by emphasising the need for all campaign histories to consider not just the combatants but the local communities — the 'third party' caught up in the conflicts.

What all these books have in common is that they were thoroughly researched, carefully planned, comprehensive in their detail, and very well (albeit plainly) written. Those qualities comprise my 'trade-mark' — the characteristics associated with my reputation as an historian. Though I say so myself, each of the books I've just enumerated is a historiographical object lesson — a model of how good histories should be written.

Encouraging other historians

As I near the end of this this chapter I should remark that after I'd established my historian's career I've spent much of it encouraging others to develop their historiographical skills. In my formative years as an historian I received generous assistance from better experienced historians. The list of them is long, including eminent scholars such as Peter Bolger, Gavan Daws, Donald Denoon, Bill Gammage, Bob Gollan, Helga & Jim Griffin, Ian Hogbin, Amirah and Ken Inglis, Sione Latukefu, Hank Nelson, Charles Rowley, Peter Ryan and Oskar Spate. Sadly, of those just named only Peter Bolger, Gavan, Bill and Helga are still extant.

Mindful of the encouragement of these historians, I've consciously endeavoured to help others develop as historians. Many of them have been fellow St John Ambulance historians. Among them have been Bruce Caslake, James Cheshire, the late Frank Dunstan, Elizabeth Ellis, David Fahey, Brian Fotheringham, Ian Kaye-Eddie, Edith Khangure, Allan Mawdsley, Trevor Mayhew and Harry Oxer.

As well as them, I've worked very closely with my two esteemed co-authors of *A Beacon of Hope*, Matthew Glozier and John Pearn. Both are professionally trained practising historians and the authors of many books. Among our other shared projects has been joint-editorship of *One St John*, the annual international online historical journal of the Most Venerable Order of St John, which we established together.

Beyond St John, those I've advised have included Gordon Briscoe, the first Aborigine to graduate with a MA and a PhD in history; Ross Kennedy, who wrote a first-rate PhD thesis at the University of Glasgow on the taxation exemptions of the Knights Hospitaller and Knights Templar in England under the Angevin kings; and Eric Johns, who has written a grand, sweeping history of Papua New Guinea up to political independence in 1975. Working closely with imaginative, dedicated and accomplished historians like Gordon, Ross and Eric has been one of my special pleasures in recent years.

Others I've advised along the way have included my Unitech colleagues, Adrian Boddy and Gordon Holden, who each felt the urge to write. They did pioneering work in documenting the indigenous architectural legacy in Papua New Guinea before going on to successful, productive careers as architectural educators in Australia and New Zealand. I felt flattered that such creative chaps should seek my advice in various writing projects.

Do I have a 'philosophy of history'?

I'm an empirical social historian, i.e. one who focuses on looking at the facts of what happened and then develops a narrative to explain how and why it did and what the consequences were. Although I naturally wish to understand the events making up the narrative, I'm not much interested in using the narrative as the basis for abstract theorising. I'll leave that to the philosophers of history who specialise in philosophically interpreting historical narratives.

I nevertheless strongly believe we can learn from history, even if history has no lessons to teach. History is simply the countless trillions of innumerable multiple billions of past events. Once they've gone they can never be recreated, although historians must try to recover and make sense of them. History itself doesn't teach anything; it's historians who do the teaching, by relating and interpreting what they've learnt to their readers.

But what have I learnt from history myself?

Because I've spent most of the past 20 years reading and writing military history, what I've learnt is that the events I deal with are immensely sad. There's not much joy in military history. It's so sad I wish it had never happened, that I might somehow have been able to prevent it from occurring.

My friend Bill Gammage points to the sadness dramatically in the opening paragraph of his book, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (1974), a classic among the vast body of Australian military history. Bill wrote that:

> *There never was a greater tragedy than the First World War. It engulfed an age, and conditioned the times that followed. It contaminated every ideal for which it was waged, it threw up waste and horror worse than all the evils it sought to avert, and it left legacies of staunchness and savagery equal to any which have bewildered men about their purpose on earth….*

Neither historians nor anyone else can 'unmake' history, however. Despite that, we live in the vain hope that nothing like World War I will ever happen again. Will humankind ever learn from the history expounded to them by historians? Everyone knows that's unlikely, but still we live in hope.

One of the most famous quotes about history has been sourced to the American investor, Warren Buffet, who purportedly said that 'what we learn from history is that people don't learn from history'. It's also attributed to others, including the English novelist and philosopher, Aldous Huxley. Whoever said it was probably borrowing from the great 19th century German philosopher of history, Georg W.F. Hegel (1770–1831), who wrote that 'what experience and history teach is this — that nations and governments have never learned anything from history, or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it'.

If we don't learn from history, why have I been pursuing it in one form or another for most of my 86 years? My answers can be found in various of my favourites among the oft-repeated sayings about history. These abound on myriad websites. Here are a dozen utterances by famous people that ring true for me:

1) *'We are not makers of history. We are made by history.'* (Martin Luther King Jr.)
2) *'Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'* (George Santayana)
3) *'History is the sum total of things that could have been avoided.'* (Konrad Adenauer)
4) *'History is a people's memory, and without a memory man is demoted to the lower animals.'* (Malcolm X)
5) *'The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.'* (George Orwell)
6) *'There is a history in all men's lives.'* (William Shakespeare)

7) *'A generation which ignores history has no past and no future.'* (Robert Heinlein)
8) *'History is not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul.'* (Lord Acton)
9) *'If you want the present to be different from the past, study the past.'* (Baruch Spinoza)
10) *'To study history means submitting to chaos and nevertheless retaining faith in order and meaning.'* (Herman Hesse)
11) *'Human history is not the product of the wise direction of human reason, but is shaped by the forces of emotion — our dreams, our pride, our greed, our fears, and our desire for revenge.'* (Lin Yutang).
12) *'If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree.'* (Michael Crichton)

One of my favourite quotes about history is from a highly accomplished British historian — the great wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Whatever else my readers might think of Churchill, and many Australians are ambivalent about him, there's no denying he was a masterful historian and indeed one of only two historians ever to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He is well known for many of his eloquent, pithy sayings about history. This one must be among his best: '*History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passion of former days*.' I don't know if Churchill himself consciously learned from history; but anyone who could write so elegantly about practising history had certainly grappled with the difficulties of researching and writing it.

My other answer about being preoccupied with history is that I must be. Being an historian is not only my vocation but also my way of life. I was also born to pursue it. It's in my DNA and it's my destiny. Being an historian is how I define myself to myself and others because it's at the core of my self-perceptions. When I'm meeting and chatting with other historians, I'm at my happiest. I can't *not* 'do history'. While I retain even a skerrick of mental competence, I'm bound to continue with it.

Finally, …

During the 49 years I've now lived in Canberra I've been a teacher, a public servant, and an historian, and for several years all three together simultaneously. They have been fulfilling years during which I 'came of age' in all three professions. I feel enormously privileged to have had this variegated career. I thank my family, my work colleagues, my fellow historians, my Order of St John confrères and consœurs, and my publishers for having made it possible.

14. THE NEXT GENERATION, AND THE NEXT

Margaret and I have three children, all born during the 1960s. They in turn married people who had also been born in the 1960s; and together each couple produced children. We have consequently had seven grandchildren. So far none of the grandchildren has married and had children of their own. (We nevertheless live in hope that our lineages will continue.) The chart of our descendants looks like this:

Three-generation family tree: from the parents to the seven grandchildren (as at my last birthday, 30 December 2023)

Parents	Children and children-in-law	Grandchildren
Ian James Howie-Willis (b. 1937) — Margaret Ann Vale (Mrs Willis, b. 1941)	Rosemary Ann Willis (b. 1963) — Jon Garde (b. 1960)	Grace Eugenia Garde (b. 1999) Cameron James Garde (2002–2006)
	Anthony James Willis (b. 1965) — Kym-Marie Turnbull (b. 1969)	Heidi Margaret Willis (b. 2001) James William Willis (b. 2004)
	Catherine Jane Willis (b. 1969) — Bruce Pieter Hoogendoorn (b. 1968)	Thomas James Hoogendoorn (b. 2000) Owen Pieter Hoogendoorn (b. 2003) Hamish Cameron Hoogendoorn (b. 2006)

Our three children were all educated mainly in Canberra. They all married people who were living in Canberra; and the marriages took place in Canberra. All seven grandchildren were born in Canberra. We can accordingly regard ourselves as a family of Canberrans, even if some of us no longer live in the national capital.

Children and children-in-law

I outlined the careers of our three children, Rosemary ('Rosie'), Anthony ('Tony') and Catherine ('Katie') in the previous chapter, so I won't repeat here what I wrote there. What I will say is they they're now all middle-aged, with their hair turning grey! Rosie has just turned 61. Tony is 58 and will turn 59 in two months. Katie turned 55 three months back. Margaret and I are immensely proud of each one of them and with what they've achieved.

Our three children-in-law are diverse, but their ancestry is like ours. They all have both Cornish and English ancestry; two have Scottish and two have Irish forebears; one has a dash of Swedish and much Dutch ancestry. I'll now outline each of them in turn.

a) Jonathan ('Jon') Garde

Jon and Rosie were married in the Canberra Botanic Gardens on Christmas Eve, 1992. Ten years later, they reaffirmed their marriage vows in a service at the Presbyterian church in Weston Creek, where they had become parishioners.

Jon was born in Melbourne to John Garde (1920–2010), a barrister-solicitor, and his wife Joan Mary Eugenie (née Spackman, 1922–2012), a private school principal. He was the youngest of their four children. In birth order the others are Peter (an electrical engineer and classical guitarist), Gregory (a barrister and now Supreme Court judge) and Felicity (a computer systems architect). Like his two older brothers, Jon had most of his schooling at Scotch College; Felicity went to Presbyterian Ladies' College. The family lived in East Bentleigh but later moved to Warrigal Road, Ashburton.

After Scotch College, Jon entered the Royal Military College, 'Duntroon', in Canberra to train as an Army officer. He spent almost three years there but left before he graduated. He then joined the Australian Public Service, in which he held various clerical positions. He met Rosie in 1982 when they were both working in the Department of Housing.

While working as a public servant Jon enrolled in a computing science degree course at the University of Canberra, which he successfully completed part-time. He also undertook a B.Sc. (Hons.) degree in Psychology at ANU, from which, predictably, he graduated with first class honours. He subsequently completed a postgraduate certificate in tertiary education. John was an outstanding, highly motivated, high-achieving student. In any course or any subject unit he ever took, he'd be disappointed if he scored anything less than a 'High Distinction'.

After graduating, Jon lectured full-time in computing at UC for several years. A promising academic career probably lay ahead of him, but after the birth of Grace in January 1999 he quit academia to work in the commercial computing industry because his earning potential was much greater there. He became a computer systems architect, i.e. the designer and implementer of major software programs. Among other projects, after he and his family moved to the UK in November 2004, he designed the software programs used by the Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru (the Welsh Assembly).

Jon's final job in Canberra was with the firm Objective, which also maintained a UK office in Maidenhead, Berkshire. Wishing to gain overseas experience, he arranged a transfer there. He and Rosie bought a house, 'The Hollies', a cottage in Breadcroft Lane, Woodlands Park, a 1930s housing development 5 kilometres south-west of Maidenhead. They would live there for the next 17 years.

b) Our trips to 'The Hollies'

We had nine holidays with Jon, Rosie and their children in their time at 'The Hollies'. Margaret had several additional short visits for special events, the last being Grace's 21st birthday in early 2020. Until the Covid19 pandemic interrupted our routine, we usually spent six or seven weeks with them every second year. In the alternating years they'd return to Canberra to catch up with family and friends here and in Melbourne and Sydney.

On these excursions we'd usually make side trips to visit places in Europe that we wished to see. The list included Budapest and Paradiso in Umbria (where we stayed with our friends Hector and Bori Clark), Malta, Rhodes, Istanbul, Bodrum, Stockholm, Uppsala, Copenhagen, Krakow, Prague, Münich, Berlin, Amsterdam and Brussels.

On the last of these expeditions, in 2019, we visited the Götz family in Langenpreising, Bavaria. The Götzes had hosted our granddaughter Heidi while she attended the local *gymnasium* (high school) on a music scholarship. From Langenpresising we went to Grossfurra, outside Erfurt in Thuringia, to visit the Vatter family. The younger Vatter daughter, Nina, had lived with Heidi & Co for six months while on student exchange in Canberra in 2016–2017. Nina came to regard us as her 'Australian grandparents'. Like the Götzes, the Vatters were astonishingly kind and hospitable.

Both the Götzes and Vatters introduced us to their extended families and invited us to family celebrations at which we greatly enjoyed chatting with *die Grosseltern* (grandparents), who were of similar age to us. They spoke little English, but my schoolboy German helped us understand each other.

Last year the Vatter family — Uwe (dad), Beate (mum), Maria (older sister) and Nina — toured Australia, so we were able to catch up with them again at a barbecue at Tony and Kym's house at which Uwe officiated. He decided he liked Australian barbecues even though he was less than impressed by Australian beer. Uwe is an engineer, Beate an architectural draftsperson, Maria an accountant, and Nina a trainee primary teacher. We feel privileged to be friends with such a family. I trust that our family's links with theirs will continue, to our mutual advantage.

On our visits to 'The Hollies' we always spent a couple of weeks travelling within the UK with Jon, Rosie and the children. We travelled up to Scotland three times, once to stay at Appin, the second time on Skye and in the Orkneys, and the third time to Glasgow. One other time we stayed in Tenby in south-western Wales, which enabled us to see much of the three south-west counties — Pembroke, Carmarthen and Cardigan. We also had many trips to Cornwall. The last time we were there, in 2019, we stayed in Jon's and Rosie's eventual retirement home, 'Cornerstone Cottage', on the waterfront in Mousehole (pronounced 'Mowzell', rhymes with 'cow-bell'), a historic fishing village near Penzance. In 2015 we also undertook a memorable canalboat tour with them, travelling a circuit of canals from Stoke Prior north to Birmingham, west to Wolverhampton, south to Stourport and Worcester then back to Stoke Prior.

As well as those trips, we travelled extensively within Britain to visit friends and relatives. These included my late cousins Betty Rewell (née Willis) and her brother Trevor Willis and their families, respectively in Twyning, near Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire and at Biddenham, near Bedford in Bedfordshire. We also visited our friends Norma and Myszka Davies in Oxford; Graham and Sue McLean in Lymm, Cheshire; Sue and George Argent in Edinburgh; and Ross Kennedy in Glasgow. We also had various trips up to London to visit places like Westminster Abbey, Australia House, St Paul's Cathedral and The Globe theatre. I usually tried to spend a day at St John's Gate in Clerkenwell, location of the Museum and Library of the Order of St John, to undertake archival research for my various St John historical projects.

We have decided we're now too old for the rigours of a 21-hour plane journey to and from the UK. From now on we'll instead subsidise the visits back to Canberra by our UK family. Meanwhile, we recall with great pleasure our many UK jaunts.

c) Jon's change of careers

Jon's career changed course dramatically about three years ago when he entered full-time training for the Methodist ministry. He and Rosie had already become Christians before they left Canberra 20 years ago. They used to attend the little Presbyterian church in Weston Creek, but when they moved to Berkshire they began attending the Windsor Methodist Church. That was because it was the church nearest to where they were living before they bought 'The Hollies'.

They became progressively more and more involved in the life of their congregation. Rosie taught Sunday School and Jon became a steward (elder). After Cameron's tragic death in 2006 (see below), the congregation gave them wonderful support. Jon responded by deepening his commitment to the church. He became an accredited lay preacher, a rigorous process requiring university-level studies in theology, scripture, the liturgy and preaching. He

proved to be an outstanding preacher. His thoughtful, carefully crafted sermons were all exemplars of the sermon-maker's art.

Eventually the Methodist ministry's 'talent-spotters' approached Jon to say they would like him to become a candidate for the ministry. He accepted the invitation. The year he did, he was one of only two candidates out of 12 selected for training. He undertook the first year of the course part-time while continuing to work as a freelance computing contractor. He completed the second year full-time at the Queen's Foundation in Birmingham, which trains both Methodist and Anglican ministers. Meanwhile, he was assigned part-time to the Marlow congregation in Buckinghamshire as a trainee minister.

Jon completed his training in August 2022. He was immediately posted to the Buckie congregation on the Moray coast of northern Scotland, east of Inverness and north-west of Aberdeen. He soon enrolled in a part-time M.Th. (Master of Theology) degree program at the ancient University of Aberdeen, which he has now completed. Rosie joined him in the manse at Buckie a couple of months later, after supervising extensive renovation works at 'The Hollies'. Being a minister's wife was a new challenge for Rosie, but she took to it with a will.

After a few weeks as the Buckie minister, Jon realised that he had finally found his true vocation. He is thriving in his new career. As well as Buckie, he is responsible for the churches in nearby Portessie, Findochty and Cullen. He is popular among his parishioners, his fellow Methodist ministers and the clergy of the other denominations. He enjoys the endless hard grind of preparing and conducting church services. As mentioned, he's an excellent preacher of the Word. He's an attentive pastoral carer. He conducts dignified special services — funerals, baptisms and marriages — and receives grateful feedback from the families for whom he has run them. (So far, these have been mostly funerals, with one baptism and no weddings. It's an aging congregation.) And, as might have been expected, he's a good manager of church property and finances. "I'm now 63," he told Rosie and Grace after several months in the job, "and at last I know I'm doing the job I was born to do."

Following a year's probationary service post-training, Jon was ordained with a dozen other ordinands in a grand ceremony in Coventry Cathedral on 25 June 2023. (An Anglican cathedral but used for Methodist ordination ceremonies because no Methodist church is big enough.) Rosie and Grace were present, and so was Katie, who travelled to the UK to represent our family. Representatives from the Buckie, Marlow and Windsor congregations also attended. We watched the two-hour ceremony online, even though it started about 11.00 p.m. Canberra time.

We are delighted with Jon's career change because after many other jobs he's now doing one he feels called to. Rosie is also happy and contented, even though she is unable to teach in Scotland. (The Scottish education authority won't recognise her Australian and English teaching qualifications. It insists that if she wishes to teach in Scotland she must obtain Scottish qualifications.) Instead she has found a new part-time career as a tour guide at Duff House near Banff (32 kms east of Buckie) and Huntly Castle (40 kms south-east of Buckie), properties managed by Historic Environment Scotland.

Meanwhile, Jon, Rosie and Grace have become UK citizens. They have dual nationality, but for education, employment and international travel purposes they found that having UK passports conferred advantages that permissive residency didn't.

d) Kym-Marie Turnbull

Kym and Tony married in the Queanbeyan Uniting Church on Saturday 19 November 1997. That was the church Kym's mother, Sandra, was attending at the time. Their wedding reception followed in King's Hall, Old Parliament House.

Kym was born in Broken Hill in the far west of New South Wales on 16 August 1969. Her parents are Murray Francis Turnbull (born 1939) from Moruya on the New South Wales south coast; and Sandra Morva Cameron (born 1944) from Broken Hill. Murray is of mixed English, Irish and German descent. Sandra's ancestry is Scottish, English and Cornish. After Kym's birth, Murray and Sandra settled in Moruya.

The third child of her family, Kym has an older sister, Carinne, and a brother, Mark. She attended St Mary's, Moruya's Catholic primary school. For her secondary education she attended Moruya High School, where she was school captain in 1987. She had earlier won the 'Caltex All-Rounder Award' for general excellence in academic achievement, leadership, personal conduct, community service, cultural pursuits and sport. (Katie also won a 'Caltex' award at Wanniassa High School.)

On finishing school, Kym came up to Canberra to attend ANU. She successfully completed double Science-Economics degrees, gaining first class honours in the Science degree. Her specialty was plant genetics. She also completed the ANU Graduate Certificate in Scientific Communication.

Kym joined Tony in England during his post-doctoral studies at the Silwood Park campus of Imperial College. They lived in a rented house near the town centre of Wokingham, in Berkshire 15 kilometres south of 'The Hollies', Rosie's and Jon's later home near Maidenhead. She worked as a field scientist for Thames Water.

Tony and Kym became formally engaged during their time in Wokingham. We visited them for a two-month holiday in 1996. We travelled widely with them during that time, including one memorable trip to Cornwall, during which we stayed in a B&B at Botallack, west of Penzance and near St Just in Penwith, location of the ancient copper mine depicted in the long-running TV historical drama, 'Poldark'.

Kym's and Tony's courtship has become one of our family's legends. They got to know each other through sharing a laboratory at ANU. Tony began leaving 'Freddo' chocolate frogs on Kym's computer keypad every couple of days. Kym couldn't work out who the mysterious 'Freddo'-giver was, but eventually a mutual friend told her that Tony was her secret admirer. They began dating each other soon afterwards.

Margaret and I didn't know about this for several months. Eventually Rosie and Katie told us. The reason was that Tony was being protective of Kym. He guessed that if he told us we'd want to meet her; and then I'd quiz her about her ancestry. We then told him to bring her here. He did the next Sunday for afternoon tea. I behaved myself by not asking her who her parents and grandparents were, at least not until the very end.

When Tony went off to Silwood Park several months later, Kym continued visiting us. She then announced that she intended joining him. They returned to Canberra permanently in July 1997. Kym was granted a PhD scholarship by the University of Sydney and she undertook her research in plant genetics at CSIRO. Tony had also secured employment at CSIRO. Kym's thesis was on the genetics of wheat, and specifically the genes that determined whether a particular variety of wheat would be 'hard' or 'soft'. The degree was conferred in the university's Great Hall in June 2001, several days before Heidi's birth. We drove up to Sydney for the ceremony.

Kym's first job after Heidi's birth was a teaching position in the Science faculty of the Canberra Institute of Technology. She became responsible for the Forensics degree program. As well as teaching, she completed an Advanced Diploma of Adult Education, which gave her a formal Education qualification. In the years that followed, she was promoted and eventually became the faculty head.

Kym's next move was to her current position, which is heading the 'STEM' ('Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths') program of the ACT Education Directorate. As the full name suggests, STEM promotes the teaching of science, maths and the technology-related

disciplines. It does so through curriculum development and the in-service training of STEM teachers.

On the home front, Kym is a wonderful wife, homemaker and mother, and a loving, dutiful daughter to her mother, who lives near the Willis-Turnbull family home in Fisher. She is also warmly supporting of her parents-in-law, for which we are deeply grateful. She has ensured that both her children have had a head-start in life; and I'm sure they'd agree with me that their Mum has been a major factor in their impressive achievements.

c) Bruce Hoogendoorn

Bruce and Katie married in the historic St Ninian's Uniting Church in Lyneham, an inner northern Canberra suburb, on 16 September 1995. St Ninian's, an ancient stone structure, was Canberra's first Presbyterian church. My small part in the service was to walk Katie down the aisle. Katie wore her mother's wedding dress, which fitted like a glove, albeit a centimetre too long. Their wedding occasioned the last grand gathering of the extended Willis family, if not of Bruce's clan too. The reception was held in the Staff Club at ANU.

Bruce was born on 5 March 1968 in Jandowae, Queensland. Jandowae, 295 kilometres west of Brisbane and 49 kilometres north-west of Dalby, is the centre of one of Queensland's largest wheat-growing districts. The reason he was born there was that his father was the minister at the local Presbyterian church.

Bruce is the older of two sons of the Rev. Pieter Hoogendoorn (born 1940, Utrecht, Netherlands) and his wife Anne Roberta née Thomas (1940–2023). His brother Craig is a year younger.

Pieter, his parents and three sisters migrated to Queensland when Pieter was 13. Their home village was Waddinxveen, 19 kilometres north-east of Rotterdam. Anne was the second of three girls born to Charles and Glady Thomas (née Kent) in Pittsworth, a town 39 kilometres south-west of Toowoomba. Pieter and Anne met while they were both students at the University of Queensland. Anne trained as a secondary teacher and Pieter for the ministry; however, he, too, qualified as a teacher later.

Bruce and Craig attended the Mount Neighbour Primary School, near their home in Kambah (the suburb next to Wanniassa). They went on to Kambah High School and then to Erindale College, just down the hill from our house.

Bruce and Katie met because Anne and I inadvertently brought them together. Anne was Katie's English teacher and home-room teacher at Wanniassa High School during all her four years at the school, 1982–1985. Margaret and I accordingly got to know Anne through meeting her a couple of times a year at parent-teacher evenings. When I began attending the Tuggeranong Uniting Church in 1987, I found that Anne and Pieter were members of the congregation. (Pieter had been one of the early TUC ministers but had meanwhile left the ministry to be a teacher.) As they were the only people I knew there, I used to chat to them over a cup of tea at the end of each service. One day Anne invited me and Margaret to have dinner with them. "Bring Katie along too," she said; "I haven't seen her for several years and I'd like to catch up with her again."

We spent a very happy couple of hours chatting with the 'Hoogies'. Bruce and Craig were also present, and they and Katie nattered away together. Some time after this, Bruce rang Kate to ask about the opening of ANU lectures. They agreed to meet up during Orientation Week. They then had coffee on several occasions over the next few months. Eventually they started dating each other. They continued seeing each other for about a year, but, perhaps inevitably, the relationship lapsed because he was only 20 and she was 19 and they had different friendship groups.

They eventually got back together again about four years later, shortly before Katie went backpacking in Europe for six months with her friend Tracey. A couple of days after her return home, Bruce dropped in to announce that they were engaged. Katie proudly displayed her sparkling new engagement ring as I uncorked a celebratory bottle of champagne.

At that stage Bruce was working as a clerical officer in Housing ACT, the government agency that manages public housing in Canberra. Katie had meanwhile won an ANU PhD scholarship and was about to begin researching her thesis in Biological Anthropology, in the course of which she examined the 1800 known prehistoric Aboriginal crania. (The data she gathered enabled her to argue that the Aborigines are essentially people of the one racial stock and not an amalgam of various immigrant groups.)

Bruce's own ANU degree was in English and Sociology, and he also had a University of Canberra graduate diploma in Professional Writing. He continued working for Housing ACT for several years after their marriage but eventually left the public service to become a full-time playwright. He enjoyed some success with the plays he wrote. He formed his own company, Long Run Theatre Productions, to produce and stage his plays.

Meanwhile, Bruce also became a 'house dad', doing the housework and caring for their three sons while Katie took on the role of sole breadwinner. He also became very active as a volunteer in coaching and administering Little Athletics and junior soccer. Moving on from play-writing, he developed new skills as a song-writer and, most recently, a stand-up comic.

Margaret and I saw all the plays Bruce staged; but so far we've not been allowed to watch him working as a stand-up comic! "The venues and the comedy are not for your tastes!" Katie explains. We nevertheless admire Bruce greatly for persevering in the difficult and demanding branches of the entertainment industry that have been his. We're also grateful to him for taking on his chosen domestic role because that has enabled Katie's professional career to flourish. Without Bruce's contributions, Katie could not have enjoyed her 'life of crime' as a senior executive in the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission.

The grandchildren

I now turn to our seven grandchildren, six of whom survive. In birth order they are:

a) Grace Eugenia Garde

Grace, our firstborn grandchild, was born in the Canberra Hospital on Tuesday 26 January 1999 — Australia Day. Jon rang us to announce her arrival several minutes later. We were at the hospital within 15 minutes, and I was soon holding the latest member of our clan. We had waited a long time for her arrival. I'd been feeling the urge to become a grandparent for the past 10 years, but none of our children seemed anxious to oblige us. I'd begun thinking that our branch of the wider Willis-Vale extended family was fated to bear no fruit, and that our genes wouldn't be passed on to a new generation. I worried needlessly, because Grace's arrival signalled the breaking of our genealogical log-jam. Six more grandchildren joined our clan over the next six years; and so on average we had a new birth to celebrate each year.

I don't know why Rosie and Jon chose 'Grace' for her first name, but I'm glad they did for it's a name I've always liked. I was puzzled by her middle name, 'Eugenia', a rare, unusual name nowadays, until I learned it was a variation of the second name of Jon's mother, Joan Eugenie Garde née Spackman. I jokingly suggested that one of her names should be 'Ozzie' because of her arrival on Australia Day, but no one seemed to find that amusing — least of all Grace when she was old enough to understand the joke.

Gracie, as I soon called her, was an intellectually precocious child with a great sense of humour. Soon after she learned to speak, she looked at Margaret one day and, with a cheeky

twinkle in her eye, then contracted 'Grandma' to 'Grammy'. Shortly afterwards she realised she could play a similar trick with my name, and so 'Grandpa' became 'Grampy'. 'Grammy' and 'Grampy' are what our grandchildren still call us. Thanks, Grace Eugenia!

In Canberra Grace attended the Montessori primary school in Yarralumla, in a former Catholic parish school. After her first year there, the school moved into its own purpose-built premises in Holt, the next suburb to Rivett, where Rosie's and Jon's family home was located. After the family relocated to 'The Hollies' in Woodlands Park at the end of 2004, Grace was enrolled in the Meadowbrook Montessori School at Warfield, near Bracknell. Later her little brother, Cameron, attended the school's preschool class; and later still Rosie taught there for 15 years.

After finishing her primary education at Meadowbrook, Grace attended the exclusive St George's Girls' School in Ascot as a 'day-girl' (not a boarder). A bequest from her late maternal grandmother, Joan Garde, made that possible. Grace had all her secondary schooling at St George's, where she spent the 7 years 2011–2017. She successfully completed her 'A-Level' exams with passes in Chemistry, English, Human Biology and Maths, as well as in Art, which she undertook separately from an art school in Henley.

Gracie inherited her father's brown eyes and dark curly hair and, like her mother, is tall. She is 5'9" (175 cms) tall. On one of her visits here, perhaps 10 years ago, she proudly announced, "Grampy, I'm now taller than you!" "Not a very hard thing to accomplish, Gracie-dearest!" I replied.

During her last two years at St George's, Grace won the 'gold' Duke of Edinburgh's Award for a series of demanding tasks in community service, cultural achievements, recreational pursuits and a self-organised adventure journey. Among others, her community service included taking 'rescue' dogs for walks and working as a volunteer in a hospital near Delhi in India. Her cultural activities included playing the harp, painting and sculpture. Her recreational pursuits included downhill skiing, at which she had become an adept; and her adventure journey was a tough eight-day walk through the Brecon Beacons national park in Wales. She received her award at a ceremony in the gardens of Buckingham Palace.

Hoping to become a medical practitioner, and interested in full-time medical research, Grace enrolled in the Medical Science (Hons.) course at the University of Swansea in Wales. She began her studies there in the summer term of 2017. Midway through her course, 2020, her studies were greatly disrupted by the Covid19 pandemic. The students were all sent home and had to continue their studies online. Meanwhile, Grace took the 'Gamsat' exam — Graduate Medical School Admissions Test — for aspiring medical practitioners, which she passed brilliantly well. In her fourth and final year, which she had to undertake online and externally from Buckie, she produced an excellent thesis on the factors contributing to ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder). Unfortunately, her studies had been greatly disrupted by the enforced Covid19 lay-off. She was disappointed to discover that the university gave her little support and left her to fend for herself. She did not proceed into the postgraduate medical degree program but instead graduated with a B.Med.Sci. (Hons.) degree in 2022.

By the time Grace graduated, she had already found a job with the Iona Community on the tiny and remote Inner Hebridean of the same name. Iona is perhaps the most historic place in all Scotland. It's where the Irish monk St Columba (AD 521–597) established his monastery in AD 563 for missionising the heathen Scots and Picts. The present-day Iona Community, founded in 1938, occupies the ancient abbey. An ecumenically Christian institution, the Community conducts retreats, workshops, liturgy-rich daily church services, children's activities and tours of the abbey and its precinct. Grace participates in and helps organise and lead all these activities.

Unfortunately, access to Iona is so difficult that Grace rarely visits Buckie, and her parents can visit her there only infrequently. We cannot be sure when we'll see Grace again. We've decided not to resume our biennial trips to the UK because we're too old for such global gallivanting. We're thinking instead of paying for Gracie to travel back to Canberra to see her kinfolk here. We eagerly look forward to the time that that might happen.

b) Thomas James Hoogendoorn

Thomas, our first grandson, is known as both 'Tom' and 'Tommy'. The name was that of his paternal grandmother, Anne Roberta Hoogendoorn née Thomas (1940–2023). His middle name, 'James', my middle name, has travelled down successive generations of my patriline. He was born in the Canberra Hospital on Friday 3 November 2000.

Tommy was a delightful little blonde-haired baby and toddler, but he soon grew into a tall, lithe, athletic boy. He now stands 6'2½" (189 cms) tall. Good at sport, he was an athlete and played soccer. Like his father before him, he specialised in the long jump and high jump, was the ACT high-jump champion in his age group for years on end through secondary school, and represented the ACT in the Australian schoolboy championships, in which he did well. As a soccer player, he was a match-winning forward, but in his late teens switched to goal-keeping, where his height and natural jumping ability gave him an advantage. We used to love attending his high jump competitions and soccer matches because he was a delight to watch. He seemed to float up and over the high-jump bar with effortless grace

Tommy was also intellectually precocious. In his early primary school years he became interested in dinosaurs. He read omnivorously in saurian palaeontology and was soon amazing us and his teachers with his vast knowledge. His interests then broadened to encompass Egyptology; and by the time he'd finished primary school, he was an authority on that as well.

Like his younger brother, Owen, Tom attended the Urambi government primary school, the nearest to the Hoogendoorn family home in Kambah (next suburb west of Wanniassa). At the beginning of Tom's Grade 5 year, Urambi closed and merged with the former Kambah High School (Bruce's old school) to become a new Kindergarten-to-Year 10 school, Namadgi, on the KHS site. (KHS had been demolished and a sparkling new school erected in its place.) After Namadgi, Tom completed his two final years of school at the Lake Tuggeranong College, the government secondary college nearest the Hoogendoorn home.

During his primary and high school years Tom learned the clarinet and gained a coveted place in the ACT government schools' concert band. He switched to bass clarinet and showed promise of a musical career if he'd been interested. As a little boy, he was one of those rare children who not only sing sweetly but maintain perfect pitch.

During his last years at school and through university, Tom supported himself by working weekends his local 'Athlete's Foot' shop. This is a retail chain of specialist sporting footwear shops. His was in the Tuggeranong Hyperdome, the major shopping complex 6 kilometres south of here. He became an expert in this field. He enjoyed such good sales that the firm's managers several times offered him the job of being the full-time manager in Tuggeranong.

After LTC, Tom enrolled in the Sports Media degree course at the University of Canberra. Among other skills, he learned to be a sports journalist. As part of his course, he spent an internship at the *Canberra Times* newspaper writing sports articles. I later collected them and made up a scrapbook for him. He writes nicely, with a relaxed, fluid writing style.

Unfortunately, like Grace, his studies were much disrupted by the Covid19 pandemic. The university shut down; the students worked online from home; they received little support from the academic staff, who seemed always to be uncontactable. He was consequently

disappointed with his course and felt that he'd largely been denied the university experiences that had been his parents'.

By the time he'd finished his degree, Tom had decided that journalism wasn't for him. He applied for and was successful in obtaining a job as a communications officer in the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission — the agency in which his mother works. He obtained the job independently of her. Like many of his family before him, he is now a public servant.

We can't be sure where Tom's career might take him next, but what we do know is that he has a range of skills and personal qualities that will help him negotiate the world of work in the years ahead.

c) Heidi Margaret Willis

Heidi, the second of our two granddaughters, was born in the Canberra Hospital on Monday 11 June 2001. Her first name was that of her mother's best friend at ANU; her middle name of course is that of her paternal grandmother. Like her parents and younger brother, she's a natural blonde, and her hair hasn't darkened with age.

Heidi had all her primary education at the nearest government primary school to Kym's and Tony's home in Waramanga — Arawang Primary School. This of course was the school that Margaret had opened some 17 years earlier.

Heidi soon showed that she was a high-achieving all-rounder, excellent at her schoolwork, good at sport (athletics, swimming, netball, gymnasium), a leader in community activities, and a good musician. She studied piano all the way up to Grade 7; and she played tuba in the ACT government schools' concert band. After moving to Canberra Girls' Grammar School for her secondary education, she took up the French horn, which she played in the school orchestra. (She nowadays plays it in the University of Queensland orchestra.) She also sang in the school choir.

At CGGS Heidi continued playing netball for school teams; she was in the school swimming squad; and she took up rowing. She rowed in a quad scull, i.e. racing boat with four rowers each wielding two oars, her team enjoying various successes at local and interstate regattas.

In Year 11 Heidi won a scholarship to attend the Karl-Ritter-von-Frisch Gymnasium (high school) at Moosburg in Bavaria for a term. While studying there she was hosted by the Götz family in nearby Langenpreising. She was studying German at CCGS, so that gave her the opportunity of becoming fluent, albeit with a Bavarian-Australian accent.

Heidi has always been an enterprising, independent young woman. Of her own volition, throughout secondary school she held part-time weekend jobs to raise money to buy her own car as soon as she could. She worked for several years in a cricket equipment store in Fyshwick, Canberra's main industrial suburb. She then found a job mixing fruit juice drinks at the 'Boost-Juice' stall in the Tuggeranong Hyperdome. Her stall was adjacent to 'Athlete's Foot', so she and her cousin Tom used to see each other working.

Heidi obtained excellent results in her Year 12 Certificate. She succeeded in winning a coveted Ramsay Scholarship to enter a 5½-year combined Law-Humanities (Western Civilisation) degree program at the University of Queensland. For the first three years she lived in Emmanuel College, formerly the on-campus Presbyterian hall of residence; she then moved into a nearby rental house with a group of friends.

Meanwhile, Heidi had taken to her university studies with a will, winning a series of awards. Most recently she has won the Constitutional Law prize. Last year she also completed a summer-school unit in International Arbitration at the Strobl (near Salzburg) campus of the University of Vienna. And next month she's off to the University of Swansea

(Grace's university) to compete in an international law mooting competition. *[Postscript: her team went on to win the grand-final in London!]* While studying, she has also worked part-time as a paralegal for a Brisbane law firm, a research assistant for a Canberra barrister and a clerical officer for the Commonwealth Royal Commission into 'Robodebt'.

Heidi Marg (as I call her) continues to amaze us with her achievements. She's due to graduate within the next 12 months. Where her legal career will then take her is uncertain at this stage, but wherever that is we can be confident she'll continue her high-achieving ways.

d) Cameron James Garde

I'm not sure why Rosie and Jon chose 'Cameron' as the name for their little boy. It's one of Rosie's ancestral names, so I guess that was part of the reason. Like Thomas, he was given my middle name as his second name. As with Tom, this was a retrospective way of honouring my Dad.

'Cammy', as he was soon known, was born in the Canberra Hospital, like Grace before him. He soon grew into a chubby, happy, cheerful little toddler. Like Grace, he was very much a Garde and bore little resemblance to anyone on the Willis-Vale side of his family. Happily for me, he quickly bonded with his 'Grampy'. We joked and laughed a lot together. His favourite trick was when I'd pretend to hide behind a door then peep out and wave at him. He thought that was hugely funny and would chortle as if it were the funniest thing ever every time I did it.

All too soon, however, he was gone. He was only turning 2 when Jon and Rosie moved to the UK. We visited them at 'The Hollies' midway through the next year, 2005, and we had many happy times with them during that visit.

Cammy was already showing musical talent. He used to walk round with a small transistor radio playing music, pretending it was a guitar; and he knew the difference between acoustic and electric guitars. I bought him a plastic ukelele so he could make his own 'music'. Grace complained the next morning that he'd lain awake most of the night strumming it.

We saw the family again the next year, when they returned to Australia for a few weeks to visit family and friends. Among our treasured photos from that time is one of a family picnic in the Canberra Botanic Gardens with all six grandchildren smiling at the camera. My gift to Cammy during that trip was a high quality ukelele that was a great improvement on the plastic one I'd given him the year before. He loved it; and it was rarely out of his hands afterwards.

Cammy loved meeting the many members of his extended Australian family, but he was glad to return to 'The Hollies'. "Baby happy now!" he whispered to Rosie when they got back there, using a pet name they used. He died three weeks later.

I won't go into the chain of tragic and avoidable events leading to his accidental death. All I'll say is that he fell down an uncapped sullage-pit in the backyard of a farmhouse that he and Rosie were visiting for the birthday party of one of Rosie's friends. After he was found, perhaps 10 minutes after he was missed, an ambulance rushed him to the Reading Hospital, which lacked the equipment to treat him. He was then raced up to London to St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, which did have the requisite equipment.

Cammy remained on life-support in the children's intensive care unit at St Mary's for four days; however, by the third day the electroencephalogram-monitoring screen indicated that he was brain-dead. Rosie and Jon took the heart-breaking decision to have the life-support equipment turned off and disconnected the next morning, Saturday 27 May 2006. After they'd asked for that, Rosie sang him his favourite folk song, 'The Skye Boat Song', which is about the departure of a loved one who'll never be seen again.

By this time, Margaret had arrived in Maidenhead. As soon as we'd received Rosie's phone call telling us of Cammy's dreadful accident, at 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday 23 May 2006, we booked Qantas flights for Margaret. She was on a plane to Sydney and then London within two hours. I couldn't travel with her, because I'd just had eye surgery and my ophthalmologist wouldn't let me fly. I followed Margaret a week later.

Margaret was with Rosie and Jon as Cammy died, about 5 minutes after being disconnected from his equipment. Grace had earlier paid a farewell visit to her little brother, to whom she was very close. The Windsor Methodist Church minister was also present.

I reached 'The Hollies' in time for Cammy's memorial service in the Windsor Methodist Church. The church was packed out. Jon delivered a moving, eloquent eulogy for his little boy. Neighbours, friends and the good parishioners of the WMC rallied round Rosie, Jon and Grace, providing marvellous continuing support. That was one reason why Jon became more deeply involved in the life of the church, which later prompted him to undertake the journey leading him into the ordained ministry.

After arriving in Maidenhead I visited the farm where Cammy's accident had occurred. One reason was to reassure the family there that Margaret and I didn't hold them responsible. They were in deep depression, blaming themselves for Cammy's death. I also wanted to see where Cammy's accident had happened. Ironically, the farm owner had meanwhile capped and child-proofed the sullage-pit — something he'd always been obliged to do but had never got round to doing. The police were going to charge him with culpable negligence, but I'm not sure if they ever did.

In the meantime, two Maidenhead police officers had driven Jon and me up to the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, where Cammy's body had been taken, so that I could formally identify the body. He was in a cot in his pyjamas and a dressing gown, looking as if he were asleep. I felt an overwhelming urge to sweep him up into my arms so that I could breathe life back into him; but a strict condition of my being there was that I must not touch him. The two policemen stood nearby to ensure that I didn't. Having identified him I sobbed as I turned away from his cot. Jon had finished his weeping by then, but the policemen watched sympathetically, guessing at my feelings. They were hardened homicide squad detectives but nevertheless had some empathy for this grandpa of the little dead boy.

Margaret and I couldn't wait around 'The Hollies' for Cammy's funeral, which wasn't held for another two months, after his body was finally released for burial by the coroner. Cammy was buried in the children's section of the cemetery of the exquisitely beautiful, tranquil 900-year-old St Michael the Archangel's Anglican Church in Warfield, outside Bracknell in Berkshire, near where Cammy had attended preschool.

Our historian friend from Oxford, Norman Davies, attended the funeral on our behalf. He wrote later to say that, as the burial service was underway, cows from the adjacent meadow wandered over, put their heads across the fence and lowed gently, as if to say, "We'll keep watch over your little boy now!"

Meanwhile, Rosie's and Jon's Canberra friends had organised a memorial service for Cammy in the Weston Creek Presbyterian Church, where he'd been baptised three years earlier. The service was conducted by the Rev. Arnold Bartholomew, who'd received both Jon and Rosie into church membership and had baptised both the children. Again, the church was packed out. Our family and friends attended in strength, as did Rosie's and Jon's friends; and Jon's family flew up from Melbourne to join us.

Scarcely a day goes by without my thinking of Cammy and praying for him, Rosie, Grace and Jon. I was only his grandfather, so if I can still grieve for him, I cannot imagine the depth of the sorrow that they must still feel for their lost little boy.

While we were still visiting 'The Hollies' biennially, we'd always try to include an excursion to Cammy's grave to pay our respects to little 'Chappy' (as Rosie called him). It

was an opportunity to be close to him again, and to reflect on all the 'might-have-beens' and the unfulfilled promise of his life-cut-too-short.

One effect of Cammy's death was to help me believe in the afterlife. "Cammy lives on," I decided; "and when my turn comes to follow him where he's gone, he'll be the first person to run forward to greet me — followed soon after by Mungo (1988–2003, my border collie), and Mum and Dad!" It's a reassuring thought that over the years has helped me cope with my grief.

Subtle reminders of Cammy's short life were everywhere around 'The Hollies'. His pedal-car and ukelele were in a corner of the bedroom he shared with Grace. His portrait, painted after his death, hung in the living room. The sunflowers he'd planted in the backyard still reseeded, sprouted and bloomed annually. The toy tip-truck he'd been playing with before he went away to that fatal birthday party was just where he'd left it, under the hedge along the front fence. Here in our Wanniassa house are other reminders. Our favourite portrait of him, a preschool photo, stands on the table in our hallway. Other photos of him are in other rooms. And on the desk beside me is a computer mouse-pad imprinted with his last artwork — a swirling finger-painting in mauves, blues and greens. Even though we don't discuss him much these days, he lives on fondly in our memories. As such, he very much remains a part of my life. Whenever I'm asked how many grandchildren I have, I reply, "Seven, but only six of them have survived."

e) Owen Pieter Hoogendoorn

Owen, our third of five grandsons, was born in the John James Hospital on Thursday 11 September 2003. I don't know why he was called Owen; perhaps it was just a name his parents liked. His middle name is the first name of his 'Opa', i.e. Netherlands-born paternal grandfather. His older brother Tommy used to call him 'Oweny', so that's what I've continued calling him.

Unlike Tom and his cousins, Owen never learned to crawl. Instead, he used to 'bottom-shuffle', propelling himself forward on his bottom with the aid of his right leg and left arm. His younger brother Hamish later got around the same way.

Like Tommy, Owen was a long jumper and high jumper who did well in the local Little Athletics weekly competition. He also plays soccer. When he played on the forward line, he was a clever little goal-sneak, who could always be relied on to score each match. He later played as a midfielder and then as a fullback; but whatever position he's placed in, he's a strategic 'thinking' player who 'reads' the flow of the game accurately, and initiates moves that save goals and open up scoring moves for his teammates in the forward line.

Again like Tommy and his cousins Heidi and James, Owen has always been musical. During primary school and junior secondary school he played saxophone in the ACT government schools' concert band. He then taught himself the electric guitar and took music as a major subject at secondary college. He composes his own pieces, which he sometimes performs for us.

Like all the Hoogendoorn men, Oweny is tall. He's the same height as his brothers, 6'2½" (189 cms), which is 1½ inches (4 cms) shorter than their father, Bruce, who's 6'4" (193 cms); however, because Tom and Owen are both solidly built, the height disparity isn't greatly apparent. He and Tom both have curly hair, a trait inherited from their mother's side of the family. The difference between them is that while Tom's hair is blonde, Owen's is dark brown.

Owen has always had a natural affinity with computers. He was already a nifty computer operator by the time he got to primary school. After he finished at Lake Tuggeranong College, he decided he didn't want to go on to university like his older brother

and cousins had. Instead he took a 'gap-year' then enrolled in the two-year 'Certificate IV' vocational education course in Cyber Security at the Canberra Institute of Technology. Meanwhile, he has been supporting himself with a part-time job as a shelf-stacker at his local supermarket.

Oweny completed his CIT course at the end of last year, and since then has been busy applying for jobs. The sad reality is for young people like him who are entering the professional workforce, he must make many applications before being granted an interview; and then it often takes many more applications before they will be offered a job. He had his first job interview earlier this week, with a major Commonwealth department. He thinks the interview went well, but he doesn't yet know the outcome. He's a smart lad and is in a field with a high demand for his kind of expertise, so I imagine he'll find a permanent job sooner rather than later.

Together with Hamish, Owen provides me with a weekly dose of entertainment and mind-exercising. They visit us most Sunday afternoons to play board games — chess, 'Scrabble', 'Monopoly', 'Cluedo', 'Masterpiece', 'Bananagrams' and others. Our favourite is 'Scrabble'. Oweny is a skilled, strategic player, and although I consider myself a highly competent player I always struggle to win. I might beat Owen about three games out of seven. Hamish, who is also becoming a skilled player, wins about as often as I do. I've given up playing chess against the boys because they beat me too easily — in about seven or eight moves. Owen put it to me gently after one game when he said, "Grampy, I think 'Scrabble' is your game, not chess!"

f) James William Willis

James was born in the John James Hospital on Wednesday 14 July 2004. Tony's only son, he is the only grandchild who can pass on my Cambridgeshire surname. He is also the only one to have my 'R-M269' Y-chromosome DNA (also known as 'R1b1a2' Y-DNA). Y-DNA passes down the male lineage. 'R-M269' is the most common Y-DNA haplogroup in Western Europe. About 92% of men in Wales carry it, as do 85% of men in Ireland. For other countries the estimates are Spain, Northern Italy and France 81%, England 78% and Portugal 60%. The mutation that gave rise to it is thought to have arisen at some time between 4000 and 10,000 years ago. That's a very wide margin of error, but by any measure, it's ancient.

'Jamesy' — my pet name for him — is a natural blonde who has retained his blondeness. His first two names were serendipitously chosen: 'James' because it was the first name of two of his four great-grandfathers, 'William' because that was the first name of the other two. The great-grandfathers were James Hamlyn Willis, James Olaf Cameron, William Henry Vale and William Lyle Turnbull.

James was a cheerful but serious-minded little boy. He has grown into a cheerful, serious-minded young man. He stands 5'10" (178 cms) tall, which is very tall for someone of his surname. He has curly blonde hair, which makes him easy to pick out in a crowd.

James followed Heidi to Arawang Primary School but left when she did to enrol in the Marist College in Pearce. He went into Year 4, the lowest year, at Marist. He remained at Marist for the next 7 years, until he left at the end of Year 10 to enter the Queensland Ballet Academy in Brisbane. Marist was a good school for James. He thrived academically, culturally and on the sports field. He took up clarinet and became an accomplished player, a soloist as well as a band member; he sang in a choir; and he performed in stage productions. Gymnastics, which he did at the Southern Canberra Gymnastics Club at Erindale, was always his main sport, but he took up both cricket and Australian Rules football and played in Marist teams for several years. I used to enjoy watching his matches because he was good at both sports.

During his junior secondary school years, James switched from gymnastics to ballet. He began attending dance classes at the Lisa Clark Dance Centre in Hume, a suburb to our east. Ballet was an extension of gymnastics, particularly the floor routines. He took readily to his new pursuit, which quickly became an all-encompassing passion. By the end of Year 10 he'd decided he wanted to make ballet his career. He gained a place at the Queensland Ballet Academy and moved to Brisbane in early 2021. While undergoing his three-year program of full-time ballet studies at the QBA, he also attended the nearby Kelvin Grove State College full-time to complete his secondary schooling. His schedule was demanding: ballet classes in the morning then school in the afternoon. James lives in an apartment near the QBA. During his first two years, his parents alternated living there with him to care for him; but since finishing school at the end of 2022, he has lived there alone.

James did very well academically. He accepted an offer from University of Queensland for a place in its pharmacy course but then deferred taking it up because Queensland Ballet gave him a place in its 'Pre-Professional' year, a one-year course of rigorous training designed to bring young dancers up to the QB's high performance standards. He is now halfway through that year, but already the QB is giving him parts in its performances. He's delighted with that because it means that for the first time, he's being paid for doing what he loves best.

We've seen two of James's ballet concerts. In August last year and again in May this year, we flew to Brisbane to watch performances in which he danced solo parts. We're amazed by his poise, grace and strength. He can hoist a ballerina overhead and hold her aloft with seeming effortless ease as if she were no more than a feather pillow.

Where James will dance after the end of this year is uncertain. He will audition with ballet companies in hope of securing a contract in 2025. Meanwhile, we're immensely proud of what he has achieved. He has applied himself zealously to his rare, difficult craft in the seven years he has been following it. We hope he finds success as he pursues it further.

g) Hamish Cameron Hoogendoorn

Hamish was born in the John James Hospital on Sunday 3 September 2006. I'm not quite sure why Kate and Bruce chose 'Hamish', but I guess it was a name that caught their fancy. He was originally going to be Hamish Ian Hoogendoorn to honour me, but then when our Cammy died just over three months before Hamish's birth, the middle name was changed to Cameron to keep alive memory of Cammy. I was delighted with that name switch.

Being the third child in a family of three boys, Ham' (as I call him) grew up somewhat in the shadow of his two older brothers; however, he has always been adept at asserting his own individuality. For instance, while they became athletes and soccer players, he has been the only one of our grandchildren to become a basketballer. The team he plays for, the 'Winunga Warriors', is technically Aboriginal, but the Aboriginal lads don't mind this 'whitey' being one of them for basketball.

Like his brothers, he's 6'2½" (189 cms) tall. When they're all here together they tower over us, reminding us of how 'height-challenged' we are. He's of more slender build than Tom and Owen and unlike them he has straight dark hair. He looks much more like his Dad than they do.

As with Oweny, Ham' has always had an affinity with computers. On visits to our house when he was only 18 months old, he used to amaze us by sitting up at the computer to play online games. He couldn't read the instructions, but he somehow always found what he wanted and would click away happily for hours on end watching 'Ben Ten' videos and playing games like 'Minecraft' and 'Roblox'.

Ham' is about to enter his last semester at Lake Tuggeranong College. Next year he hopes to enrol in the same Cyber Security certificate course at Canberra Institute of Technology that Owen undertook. Like his brother he has played in school bands, his instruments being clarinet, trombone and percussion.

When Ham' finishes school at the end of this year, that'll be something of a transition for us because we've had grandchildren continually in preschool or school in Canberra for the past 23 years.

Meanwhile, Ham' has a part-time Saturday morning job working for Margaret and me. We started employing him about 9 months ago to help me rehabilitate our much-overgrown garden. He has helped me prune back bushes, plant new fruit trees, rid the garden of African iris (a pretty but dreadfully invasive plant that's hard to get rid of), rearrange the rocks forming the borders for our pathways, undertake weeding, fertilise fruit trees, maintain the vegetable gardens, lay new woodchip garden mulch, and cart trailer-loads of prunings to the green recycling depot on Mugga Lane. Better than his tireless efforts in the garden, however, is the pleasure his company gives us. He has matured into a delightful young man, and so every hour we spend in his company is a joy.

Conclusion

Looking at our children and grandchildren, I'm conscious of how family life is a continually woven, variegated tapestry. Each generation adds its colour to the weave and then gives way to the next.

I'm also reminded of the fifth verse in the 1708 hymn by Isaac Watts (1674–1748), 'O God, our help in ages past':

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

We are all fated to be born away by time's river, and eventually forgotten. If we're fortunate, our children and grandchildren will remember us affectionately, but beyond them the memory of us will fade into oblivion. Aware that that will also happen to me, I remain grateful for the children and grandchildren bestowed upon me. In what is now a long life, they have been God's greatest gift.

I'm at the end of these memoirs now. When I started writing them a year ago, I never intended that they'd grow to 402 A4 manuscript pages and 261,000 words, which makes them by far the longest book I've ever written. My original reason for beginning them was to give my children and grandchildren some idea of who their ancestors were. I guessed I might write a few dozen pages. As is the way with manuscripts, however, my chapters took on a life of their own, dragging me their author wherever they wished to go.

There's much I haven't included. For instance, I've not said much about my complex and sometimes vexed relationship with my parents and siblings. I haven't discussed my marriage, which has survived for 62 years now; however, I trust that my love, respect for, appreciation of, and reliance on Margaret have been implicit in the foregoing chapters. I've said little about hobbies that have been mine at various stages of my life, including my interest in Australian prehistory and evidence for this in the places where I've lived; and I've nowhere touched on my interest in Myers-Briggs personality theory. (For those who are curious, I'm an 'INFP'.) I haven't discussed the series of lads I mentored, some informally and one formally through the Barnardo's Kids' Friends program. I haven't alluded to the garden of Australian native plants that Margaret and I have spent the past 46 years developing here in Wanniassa. In the process, landscaping and 'birdscaping' (planting shrubs

that attract birds) have become skills I've acquired. I've said little about my 30+ years as a long-distance runner, during which I ran 12 marathons. By my estimate, I ran at least 35,000 kilometres during my running years. And I haven't said that when injuries forced me out of running, I became a swimmer instead. I haven't bothered you with my ailments, including a prostatectomy for prostate cancer (1997), a triple arthrodesis to reconstruct my left ankle (2008) and arthroplasty (replacement) of my right hip (2022). Nor have I elaborated on being a parishioner and sometime Elder at the Tuggeranong Uniting Church for the past 38½ years; and I haven't described how I was kept very busy there as a lay preacher for 17 years. In that connection, I've largely left untouched my religious views, though I hope my readers will by now understand that I'm a practising Christian and proud to be identified as such.

If I'd tried to include all these and various other unmentioned topics, this would be a 4-volume book of a thousand pages; and if it were that size, no one, not even the most devoted member of my tribe, could be bothered reading it.

I trust that the 14 chapters I've produced do somewhat more than speak about the ancestors, which was my original purpose. If nothing else, these 402 pages will have conveyed to my readers my impressions of some of the history I've personally lived through. If they've persevered through all my chapters, they'll have learnt what it was like living in Australia during World War II, being at primary school in suburban Melbourne during the 1940s, coming of age in the 1950s, marrying and becoming a parent in the 1960s, living in pre-independence Papua New Guinea and so on. And if any of them wish to become historians themselves, the book contains useful 'how-to' hints.

Was any of what I've written about important? I obviously think so. I wouldn't have kept writing for so many pages if that hadn't been true. I hope my children and grandchildren will also think my labours have been worthwhile, because they, first and foremost, are my target audience.

I'll end with what has always been one of my favourite quotations about writing. It's a Biblical verse, from John 19:20–22, where Pontius Pilate famously pronounces in Latin, "*Quod scripsi, scripsi!*" — "What I have written, I have written".

Pilate was telling the Jewish priests that he would not amend what, mockingly, he had caused to be inscribed on the sign hung above Jesus on the cross, namely '*Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum'* ('Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews') in Latin, Greek and Aramaic. They had objected to this phrase and wanted him to replace it with 'He said he was the King of the Jews'.

Unlike Pilate, I'm always ready to amend what I've written, especially if I can improve on what I initially wrote. Historians know that their output isn't holy writ, that it can always be recast to be more accurate, more expressive and more readily comprehended. As they write, they continually revise with that in mind; and if they come back later to something they've drafted, they'll usually find ways of improving it. That doesn't mean that I'll eventually rewrite the foregoing pages, only that I recognise that history-writing is never sacrosanct: it's a fluid undertaking, with much scope for improvement and revision.

For the time being, however, *Quod scripsi, scripsi!* I trust that you my readers might appreciate the results.

Postscript

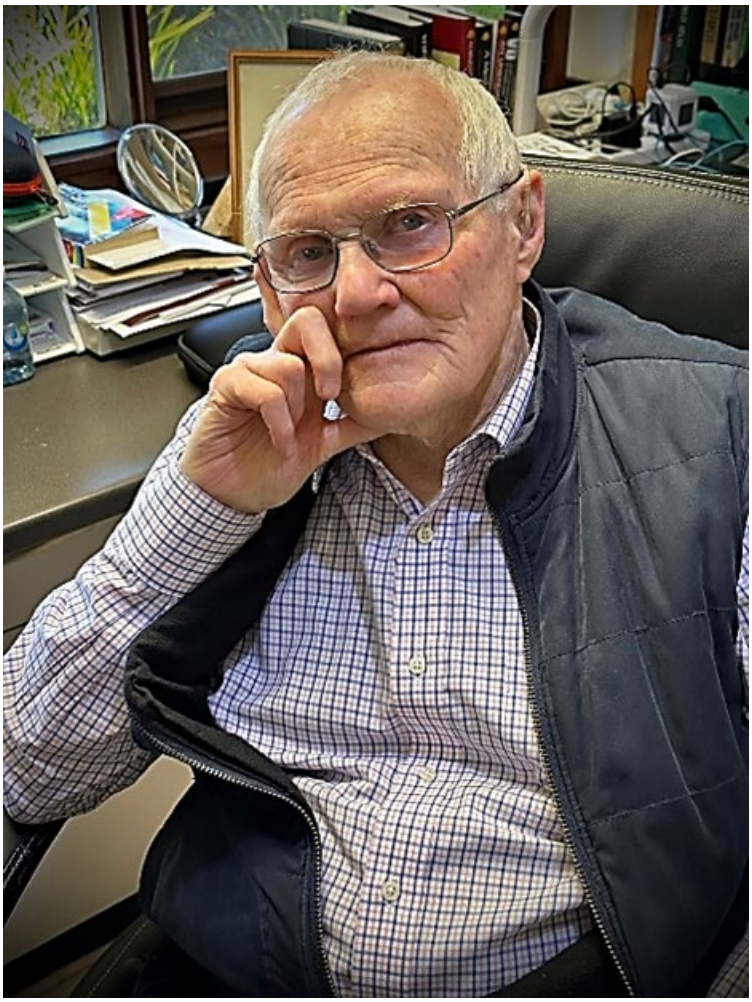
After concluding the foregoing pages, I came across one of William Shakespeare's sonnets, Sonnet 30. It speaks of regrets over opportunities lost and onetime friends insufficiently appreciated. The poem resonates with me both personally and as an historian.

Ever since I had to study Shakespeare at school 70 and more years ago, I've valued the majesty of his writing. I've long agreed with the oft-repeated adage that 'Shakespeare said it first and best!' I don't actually read him much, but I sometimes come across sayings attributed to him. Whenever I do, I'm struck by their profound insights into the human condition, their wisdom and the beauty and imaginativeness of their expression.

So it was when I read Sonnet 30 just now. I'll share it with you, dear reader, and in doing so will let Shakespeare have the last word. Here now is Sonnet 30:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear times' waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances forgone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 30, circa 1596–1600.



The author at home in his study in Wanniassa, the place where he spends most of his waking hours.

'Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none' (William Shakespeare, in All's Well That Ends Well, Act 1 Scene 1, written at some time 1598–1608).