

***WE'LL KEEP A
WELCOME!***



The Life Story of Sidney John Grant

Born in a mining community in South Wales in 1907, Sidney Grant moved to London, before marrying a girl from a mining community in Bristol, then running a general store there.

Sidney served in the RAF during WWII, then in 1948 the family emigrated to Australia, where eventually they opened Grant's Bookshop in Melbourne.

The shop became well known worldwide for dealing in antiquarian books, and the business continues to this day under different ownership.

This autobiographical account of his life was found as a typewritten document in 2020 amongst papers left by his late sister-in-law.

He only came back to the UK once, and that was towards the end of his life. He appears to have written a reflective postscript to his earlier account.

The cover photograph is of Sidney and Dorrie's wedding in 1934. The best man's name isn't known, the bridesmaid is Dorrie's 16 year-old sister Gladys.

Introduction

Whilst looking through old family photographs and papers from my mother's family, I came across a 34-page typewritten document by her brother-in-law, Sidney Grant. He was born in a Welsh mining community, and married my mother's sister Dorothy in 1934. They had one son, Michael. Sidney served in the RAF through World War II, then in 1948 the Grant family emigrated to Australia.

There he became a well-known dealer in antique and collectable books in Melbourne. The shop he opened, Grant's Bookshop, is still trading today, but under different ownership.

I decided to turn Sidney's typescript into a booklet for family members, and anyone else who might be interested.

Where there is ambiguity or an explanation would be helpful, I have added a footnote.

*Alan Freke
Frenchay, 2020*

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The Life Story of Sidney John Grant

Chapter 1

All happenings in history seem to draw our thoughts back to a time well before the event. This is very true in respect to the writer. So like the old Bible stories and their genealogy references, my beginnings were laid, well before my advent.

My Father was Albert Stanley Grant, a Welsh miner. He spent most of his life in the Welsh Valleys as a coal miner. He was one of a large family, who I understand descended from the Grants, in Aberdeen. He was a talented public speaker and was a Methodist Local Preacher. Besides this he was on the local Council, and an active member of the Miners Union. Our home was often a place where people came for help and guidance with some problem. So when the work at the pit was finished, it was a hurry on to some meeting or other. His clean clothes and shoes were always kept ready for a quick change of roles in his life.

Some years before my advent, Dad's two brothers, Charles and Richard, had migrated to Colorado, in the United States. So it seemed natural for Father to think of following them sometime. And so it came about that my Mother and Father and my elder brother Bert, sailed away to join the relatives in America.

Father soon settled to life over there, and became again local preacher in the Methodist Church. His talents at public speaking and singing made life very happy for many. Then came another addition to the family, my sister Ethel was born. It was not a happy time for Mother, she had been quite ill and so distressed that the doctor attending her advised Father to take her back to Wales. The very cold winters and hot summers had reduced Mother to being an invalid. It must have broken Fathers heart to return home, but it was that or lose his wife.

So they arrived back in Wales, and moved into Number one Hatter Street, Brynmawr, Breckonsshire. This is a cold windy place on the edge of Wales, with the coal mines and steel works lying to the south and west of the town. It was a market town, and many folk came up from the mining towns in the valleys, I used to think, for the fresh air. The English meaning of the name is, Big Hill. Some of the most beautiful scenery in Wales lies not far away, towards Gilwern and Abergavenny, and on further the Brecon Beacons. To the west was the Ebbw Vale steel works and on further was the Dowlais steel

works. Near these were many pits and when the depression came this whole area became a very sad place, it was often referred to, as one of the worst in England and Wales. Many men of thirty years old had never had a job.

However there was some respite after my parents arrived back in Wales, that is until the 9th of December 1907. For on that day their third child arrived, that was me. My Mother was someone whom everyone loved. People who once met her, never forgot her. She was a small quiet lady, and it was always plain that Father could never have got a better helper for his kind of life.

The dangers of pit life and the very sad future which loomed for her family must have saddened her. It was said that no one ever heard our Mam complain or grumble about life. Her kindness to neighbours and callers at the house was well known right throughout the district. If one wanted a cup of tea, sugar or anything else and it was to be had, Mother would give it to the caller. One little incident comes to mind. I was a teenager, and had bought myself a lovely new tie for my new suit. That tie had a lot of red in it. A caller, who was a strong labour unionist, asked Mam if she had any reddish material, she looked through her odds and ends, and found no red, then as if inspired she thought of Sid's tie.... so I had to buy a new tie. But we all loved her, truly a great lady.

Mother's maiden name was Gurney, and her family lived in London. Her Father was head keeper on the Dukes Meadows, Chiswick. Like most young girls of those days, they leave home for service in some gentleman's home. One of her first jobs was in Barry, Glamorganshire. This is a lovely and popular seaside place where most miners from the valleys go for a days outing. It had the usual sandy beach, also a pebble beach. But what drew most of the youngsters was the showgrounds. There was the figure eight and swings, in fact there was plenty for the young miners to spend their hard earned money on. It was a great day, that trip to Barry. This is the kind of place where Mother was when Father came into her life.

He had met with an accident and was according to Mam, covered with bandages. But as always love will find a way. The friendship grew and that was the beginning of a lifetime of service. Her devotion to her chapel could not be bettered, but nothing altered her duty to her family and being a good neighbour. Trying to get settled after our little family returned to Wales, must have been very difficult, Father being disappointed and having to start a new life, his hopes had been dashed, leaving two brothers in Colorado, now finding some solace in his brother George in George St. Brynmawr. The old miners were tough and had learned to stand up to difficulties and were always quick to get back to work and life. Very soon, Dad was back to being a local preacher and in the swing of public life. Mother was still not well and now something which

must have worried my parents, she was expecting her third child. I suspect that though they were a good Christian couple, this new child coming must have caused great concern to them. Maybe there has been some research into the effect of a Mother and her health on the unborn child, and have often wondered what was imparted in this case. However on December 9th 1907, this perplexed and worried Mother brought forth, as the Bible says, a Male Child. So here I was, a start was made to what turned out to be a very interesting life, 75 years later I can truly say this.

But... and who hasn't said this word but and the word if, my parents must have, many times. This new child of theirs had come into the world with a problem. I was taken from my Mother very soon and under the care of a very good doctor in Bristol. He was Dr. Rendle Short, and he was an expert in Cleft Palate cases. I had arrived in this hard world with this sad handicap. However with the prayers and skill of the Doctors and the hospital, above all the faith and love of my parents, my life moved on. Many gave sympathy and offered help. However it had to be learned myself that this world can be quite cruel, and when entering the schooling, I found, making myself understood very trying. Children can be cruel to those less fortunate physically. Our Uncle George cared a lot for my Mother and so it was that his three children Sue, Lily and Harry, became almost custodians of their unfortunate cousin. Lily especially, became my God-Mother, and I will always value her loving care for me. So it was that these three, became more like Brother and Sister to me. Their ages were much older than I, so they helped in an adult way. I remember Harry coming home on leave during the first World War, he was in the R.A.M.C. and still a very young man, we were all very proud of Harry and saddened when he left for France and war duty. Later he returned to his University Studies and became a school teacher, and at one time I was in his class, and was tormented by other boys for being favoured. However he later became Headmaster of a fine school in Brecon. His sister Lily became Headmistress of Ebbw Vale County somewhere up north, she married a schoolmaster, not far from Manchester.

So it was that I grew up closer to this family than my real brothers and sisters. When I was about five or six years old, my Father and his little family decided to move back to his old home town, Gilfach Goch in Glamorganshire. It was not surprising therefore that when my holidays from school came along, a trip was arranged for me to go to my parents. Those holidays were a lot of fun, here were children of my own age and real brothers and sisters. I remember later when I read the Tale of Two Cities, thinking, yes that was good, but I know a lot about a Tale of two homes. These two homes were so different. Father was

very strict on his Church Life and Mothers are so different to Aunts. Life being so much noisier and somehow more exciting.

The valley was alive with miners and there was something happening every day, or so it seems. There were many pit accidents, many stories of valour. It takes little imagination to realise how I felt on my return to Brynmawr. There I had my own things and no one to interfere with them. If I wanted anything, money was found, the cost never mentioned. If my shoes were shabby, then get new ones, the same with everything, I was like little Lord Fauntleroy compared to my Brothers and Sisters. It was hard times in those days for the miners in the valleys. Besides that, my Father always kept a pony and trap. And that was great fun for my trip to Mum and Dad. In Brynmawr time was never wasted, get a book and study, in fact, though I did not realise it then, I was very lucky.

As I look back over the years, and think of that mystical side of life, where wisdom has its place, I wonder. A seed from a tree planted unknown and uncared for may grow, and its value may be great, it is only many years later that it can be known to have been made part of a house, or part of a home, the possibilities are numberless, one could even say it can be made into a gallows or a Church. While alive and growing, it is a place of safety and a home for our birds.

So it was that the influence of both these homes made me ready for adult life. That I was confused as a youth would be no surprise to my family and friends. Times... became bad and the pits were often shut, businesses were folding up and bankruptcy and suicides, common. Wales became one of the most depressed areas of Britain. My Father was fortunate, being well known, and socially active, he managed very well. My uncle had his own business and was headed for bankruptcy. People could not pay debts and could not afford the simple things of life. He, however, took to drink and became a difficult and dangerous man to have about the house. Often one of his daughters would pick him up in the gutter outside the house, he would be blind drunk. Life became very unsettled and for good or ill, on my next visit to Gilfach Goch, I asked that I not be sent back to my other home. My wishes were granted and Mother and Father had a conference ending with Father saying "Well my lad, its the PITS now for you". So that settled the first part of my life's journey and I was fitted out with pit clothes and boots and made ready to join my Father and Brother in the Glenavon Colliery, Gilfach Goch.

This pit was the first of five in the valley, it had no pit-head gear, its workings reached by a drift from the surface. My first jobs were being a butty to a miner. Making sure he had as much light as possible from his miner's lamp. Getting his picks sharpened at the blacksmith's shop. Then loading the coal he had cut,

into the trams ready for taking to the surface, after putting his miners number in chalk on the side of the tram. It doesn't take long to get used to routine down under, there was always the danger and news of an accident somewhere, some miners earned good money when the pits were in full time, others had a bare living, and often lost time with small accidents. Losing a finger or injuring a foot and many had the awful miners cough, caused by the dust they inhaled.

I had not been at this pit very long when Father found a Job in the Iron Ore Mine in Llanharry. Soon we had all moved to Pontyclun, near Llantrisant. This was a great change for us all. There were lovely green fields, the air was cleaner and a much healthier place for us. My Brother Burt who had by now married also got a job in the same mine. While I and my younger Brother George got a place in the Llanlay Coal Pit, about a mile from where we lived.

Pontyclun is a very pleasant village, on the main line from Cardiff to west Wales. There are some fine old houses near, Miskin Manor and Talygarn, both very large estates, owned by Coal owners. Many local people had worked at these fine homes and most property in the area belonged to the estates. When one owner died at one estate he left... orders in his will, that all tenants who had lived over three years in their house stay there for the rest of their life, rent free.

The road in front of our home joined both the Iron Ore Mine and the Coal Mine, so it was strange to see men coming home from work with iron dust while there would be men coming home the other way, very black from coal dust. We lived roughly half way between these two pits in a rank of houses, nick named Monkey Island. I never knew why this was, being such a pleasant group of eight houses surrounded by green fields, even a farm across the road and cattle grazing a hundred yards away.

Most places seem to produce a man, who becomes a legend. Llantrisant had one. He was Doctor Price, he, being the first in Wales to practice cremation. His own child died and he cremated the body at his home. He was a strange character in other ways. The story is told how he had the best carriage and pair of horses for miles around. He went, one day, to Cardiff and pulled up outside a big store. The staff seeing this fine turnout, thought here comes the big spender. The head salesman took charge and conducted the Dr. around the store. Often he would ask the Dr. "Do you like that, or would you prefer this", the Doctor would make his choice known and then followed the fatal mistake. The salesman asked "Sir, would you like us to send it". The wiley old Dr. was fully awake, and replied, "If you would like to, then I will be pleased". He chose many items of furniture and they were duly sent to his home in Llantrisant. Months passed and the manager of the store thought the Doctor should be reminded of his obligation to pay up. These letters were ignored by the Doctor.

Soon the law was put into action. Court action was taken, and the crafty old fellow conducted his own defence. "Your Honour" he said, "This action is of no concern to me, I was asked when I visited the store to choose, then asked if it could be sent, nothing was ever said about buying anything, they are invited to come and take back these unwanted items they so kindly brought to my house". What could a magistrate say to such a defence, the goods were duly returned and life resumed to normal in the town. Though at the cremation of his child, the police did take action and the crafty old Doctor evaded them for many months by dressing as a woman, but as the story goes, there was a policeman who is smarter than the crook... Another story is told of when he wanted a gardener. He employed a man at so much a day. At the end of each day he was paid, the worker thought how silly calling each day for pay, why not the end of the week. After working the whole week, the gardener turned up for his weeks pay. No way would the Doctor pay for a week, the arrangement was a daily pay out, and that was how it had to be.

Another character who was a legend, or folk hero, was Isaac Lewis. His story was very popular among the Welsh Miners. He left Wales in the 1800's for America being a miner he chose mining areas to settle down. However Wales was home and he tired of his American Cousins. When he came back he wrote a book of his adventures in the new land. In his book he tells of the land where everything is bigger and better. Once when looking for work, he came across a mine, thinking to try his luck for a job, he rode his horse near the pit, tied up and took a good look. He was amazed to find the trig wheels on the pithead turning and not a soul in sight. He went into the engine house and found the driver fast asleep. He shook the sleeping man and shouted "Man you're mad, there is going to be an accident", the half awake driver just asked what day it was, on being told it was Tuesday, he turned over and went back to sleep saying "we don't reach the bottom 'till Saturday." The book ends by explaining how he got back from America to Wales. "It was like this" says he, "I was tired of roaming and wanted to be back home, but how could I do so, without much money". So I put my thinking cap on and managed to buy enough tins of treacle to put my scheme in action. I climbed a big tree one evening, and poured the treacle on the branches, then climbed on a branch and went to sleep. During the night the biggest birds you have ever seen nested in that tree, took off and flew over the sea back to Wales, believe it or not, that's my story. The old miners told many such wild stories of poor Isaac's adventures.

As I became older and discovered there were better jobs in the pit than with the miners, I took on engine driving, I drove & main and tail, that is two ropes one in and one out. At first it was tricky but soon mastered it. This way of pit life

suit me, but my brother George still worked hard at the coal face, found life too much. One day after an accident which frightened him though unhurt he asked his Mother and Father to let him leave home. He did and later became a butler to Lord and Lady Lever, of the Lever Brothers. For my causes to leave I was involved in an accident where we were shut in. A frightening thing happened, when a steel rope which travelled down a pipe casing in the shaft, then round large pulley wheels, snapped. The accident happened during the change of shifts. Men were leaving for home others were coming down the shaft to start work when the rope in the casing broke, this scattered the piping and like a strong spring the steel rope lashed from side to side. As it sprang from side to side there were flashes of light and the noise of thunder. A cage full of men were near the bottom and some jumped out when nearly down and were injured. There were a group of older miners, which I joined away from the shaft and we all lay down in the side of the workings, thinking an explosion had occurred. The pit ponies had taken fright and gave us a fright as they galloped away into the workings. Men were scared and some thinking this was the end. However after some time an old miner who took charge of we young boys, said, "there was no explosion". After investigating he told us exactly what happened. We were shut off from those above, no communication was possible. After a few hours of this, tension eased, men started singing, some said a few prayers. Later talk was started on how could we get out and how to communicate with those above? It was decided that if two of the smallest boys would be willing, they could take a chance of going up though the old workings.

It was decided that two would try. Myself and another lad. We were briefed and taken to a spot a few hundred yards away. There in the side, was a hole with cool air flowing, also a little stream of water. The size of this hole made me feel sick. There was hardly room to stand a miners lamp up straight. We started, the other lad went first, I crawling after, very soon we were wet through and very cold, and becoming more frightened, as we found the hole smaller. It was a struggle for a few hundred yards, later we had more room and were able to rest for a while. We had now very little light left in our lamps, and as we were instructed, we felt for train lines as guidance. This we followed for what seemed hours. Then as if heaven had answered all our prayers we heard noises from above. We had arrived at an old shaft and had only to attract attention. This we did try making as much noise as possible by banging two pieces of iron. Eventually a reply was heard and then a wonderful sight, we saw appearing down the shaft a large bucket, we were told to come up one at a time, my friend went first, then the bucket was returned for my turn up daylight.

What a sight that was at the pit head. Many asking about who and where and what, so many questions all at once that the safety men took us away into the office, where we were given a chance to tell our story. Next day they got a relief party down and in a few days all was back to normal. Though that experience did do something towards building my character and some good may have come from it, my decision was made to leave home and the pits forever. Before leaving my Father did meet with a serious accident and never returned to work. So with my brother George and a Sister in London I set off to join them, in the big city. Before leaving my life in Wales I would like to tell of life in the mining community. The Gilfach Valley was lined with rows of houses, mostly built of grey stone. This hole in the hills was divided by a dirty looking stream. There were many chapels, the Methodist being the most popular. The miners had a flare for music and many choirs and bands were formed.

A family with several men from the pit coming home each shift, was a pantomime. The first home would get fresh clean water. The tin bath, usually kept hanging on the wall, out the back of the house, would be brought in and in front of the fire we would wait our turn to rid ourselves of coal dust. First in is lucky, last in gets more dirt than water. However these things were taken as a matter of course. One interesting thing was, should you be the only one in the house and wished to have your back washed? what then?. Simple, just knock the wall and the lady next door would come in to wash your back. There was no fuss about being immodest, it was part of life. A coal miner always has that coal dust look. Even when appearing at an Esteddod. Even after so many years I take off my hat to the miners, they are a fine lot of men. Should they get upset over something, then its a different story. One time in Gilfach, a new police man was sent to bring some discipline to the valley, too much gambling went on. These boys did not want to be cleaned up by a policeman. So they lured the unhappy one, into the hills and stripped him of all his clothes, set him off home, with a warning to keep away from them. He left the valley soon after.

On getting to London and learning the ways of the traffic and a bit of geography, I had to find a job. There was an advertisement for someone with musical knowledge on the staff of a private mental home. I applied and was accepted. I spent five years studying and developing my music there. This was a very pleasant time in my life.

While in this Mental Home, which was near Hampton Court, and quite near the river Thames, I spent many enjoyable hours boating and punting, this exercise helped me considerably. One of the staff was Trevor Rees, who came from Wales and was a fine violin player, and together with Arthur Hollowood, a

pianist and myself on cello, formed a trio. We did many musical afternoons on the lawns near the river, playing mostly light musical comedy and popular numbers.

Trevor with delightful violin solo's soon attracted some followers and one young lady followed us in our river trips. What was funny as I look back, was we took turns to take Matrel home. Trevor became the lover and eventually married her. They had four children, before Trevor met his end in Tobruk during that part of World War 2. I landed in Tunis a few months after this, but sad news like this was an every day news item. I had lost a very good friend.

Some other friends which I shall never forget, were the Reeves family. They lived in Hampton Wick, and made me one of the family. In fact they had a daughter Florrie who had a crush on me, and still writes to me, she having married and widowed.

One day about Christmas time I received a letter from a girl, a daughter of a friend of my Fathers*. She was Dorothy Brown of Crofts End, Bristol. With the letter was a pair of socks she had knitted. It was a surprise, a letter inviting me to come to Bristol on my next holidays. This I did and soon found a good friend for life in Dorrie, as she was known and loved by all her friends and family. I left my job with the handicapped and set out on a new life in Bristol.

** At first sight it may appear puzzling that with the poor communications of the 1930s, a coal miner in Wales would be a friend of a coal miner in Bristol, but there may be a simple explanation.*

During the 1926 Miners' Strike (which lasted 9 months) groups of striking miners marched from South Wales to London to lobby Parliament. Most made an overnight stop in Bristol, and Crofts End Miners' Mission was where many were fed and spent the night.

The mission had been founded in 1895 by a local 20 year-old coal miner named George Brown. He continued working as a miner, whilst running the mission until 1927, when he became the full time missionary there until his death in 1949.

Dorothy was a daughter of George Brown, who Sidney said was his father's friend. It seems probable that they had met during a 1926 miners' stopover at Crofts End. My mother Gladys, another of George's daughters, told me that many friendships were forged during these stopovers, and that when she was a child, she had many holidays with a mining family in Beaufort – a mining village just over a mile from Brynmawr where the Grants lived.

Work was very scarce in those days. 1930's were bad days and to leave a secure job with nothing arranged was suicide. However, having set out, there was no turning track. My savings soon looked sick, and no income except the dole was my style. We had to decide quickly, back to Wales, or back to London, Bristol was not for me.

A friend of my Father, who was well known and had moved to Bristol came to my aid, with advice and help. His son had a lending library and a little general shop in Clifton. I was asked would I like to have it? Dorrie and I talked it over and it meant, getting married and taking the shop or... I was leaving. We took the shop. Not much of a place but we lived much better than on the dole.

This little shop was in Highland Square, a few hundred yards from the well known Durdham Downs, on the top of Whiteladies Road, anyone who knows that area will readily confirm the beautiful views from this open space. The sight of the Gorge and the famous Clifton Suspension Bridge, only a short walk away from where we lived. We were truly very fortunate to have a home and job so soon after being married.

Life in Bristol was eventful, and gave us a good start in what later proved to be an eventful life for all of us. We made many friends, a capable couple in the music field were Mervyn and his wife Cora Prior, he played the violin and Cora the piano, she also taught the pianoforte to local children. At this time Dorrie used to sing duets with Mervyn when we went entertaining. He later became the conductor of a Male Voice Choir.

However it was another family who played a great part in our future, they were the Berryman family. They owned a Wholesale Tobacco and Sweet business, from them we bought our stock for our little shop. So the day of marriage slowly and pleasantly continued, until the start of World War 2. The rumblings of war made everyone cautious of the future. We had the gift of a son, Michael and feared for his future. It seemed the baby-hood of Michael rushed quickly into boyhood, as we entered the phoney period of the war. Life it seemed was different for everybody, gone was the shortage of work, factories making things of war were very busy. The famous Bristol Aircraft Factory were turning out Fighting Aircraft as fast as they could. Then the fateful days of 1939 and the declaration, men being rushed into uniform. Hitler and his War machine had now entered Poland, and had invaded France, the question came up in everyone's mind, what country would be next?

Then air raids became more serious and more often. We in Bristol knew the Aircraft Works would be raided sooner or later. The time came all too soon, many were killed in those raids, the city came in for its fair share too. Each

raid made us wonder when the next would be, the sound of the sirens sent fear down each man, woman and child, one wonders now, how we all survived. However, we had, like all the rest, to live our lives day by day. We were continually tired, being kept awake and tense at night.' We decided to let Dorrie and Michael go live in St. George for a few days. The older folk were by now feeling the strain, and it would be a rest for us all.

London had by this time had several heavy raids and my brother Bert sent and asked could his wife and two children come down to Bristol with us, we had plenty of room and thought it a good idea. Bert was now on rescue work in the city and knew the vicious side of war, first hand. So they were staying with us, and having a good public air raid shelter near by, we thought things were good.

One Sunday night in December, the bombers came over and tried to set fire to the city of Bristol. A good job they made of it, too. I was shocked when I went to see. We had some incendiaries fall in our back kitchen. Luckily we got to them quickly and used the earth from the garden to attack the flames. The curtains were burnt and some minor damage including a window sky-light.

However a week later, almost in the same spot a 500lb bomb landed, that was the end. I considered myself lucky, usually I went to the back of the house when a raid started, this night I went to the front, and lived to tell the tale. The back of the house was gone, what was left of the roof was lying crazily waiting to fall off, the front was lying on the pavement and as the dust cleared, and my wits returned, the scene became a fact of life. Inside that wreck was my brothers family, a Mother and two children. My brain almost failed as I went into the house, imagine my gladness when all three came out safe and well. Hedley had taken his Mother and Sister under our big solid kitchen table for safety, this saved them all. After that terrifying moment which was like eternity, we went to the public shelter, very thankful for being spared.

There was a lot of tragedy that week in our street. A whole family were wiped out, a doctor his wife and three children together with the grandparents. Burnt to death in the cellar of their home. Gone was the old Clifton Church, and some local shops. This was war, the question was asked, how much can a nation take of this?. I stayed alone on the site, for two whole weeks, without going to bed and having a bite of anything brought along by kind friends. One friend was a kindly and well-known courtier, who lived not far away. She came regularly with food and drink, for me, and I will always remember her, as a faithful friend.

My Brothers family had now decided to go to Wales to my Mothers home. My Wife and Michael stayed with her Mother and I... What could I do? In a state of

shock I accepted help from an old friend and family, until I decided to try a rest in Wales, but that was not satisfactory, there was only one answer, do as many other men were doing. Join up. So off I went to an Air Force recruiting depot. After the usual assessment for job and health, I was accepted as a clerk G.D. given a uniform and sent on training, how they rushed we poor recruits through, the forces were desperate for men, I am sure so long as a man can stand up and answer and obey orders, he was in the army or any service.

So after square bashing, I was on my first posting, the secret places one heard about, some blokes had a special desire, to a nice quiet spot, preferably away from the war. Soon I found my person being herded with others to a train. We headed north, on and on to a staging unit in Scotland. Imagine my surprise finding the end of that trip in Aberdeen. Somewhere, sometime, I had heard that some forebears came from that city. I used my time waiting further orders, finding out from the public library some acts of our family tree. Very interesting side of our family came to light, a well known historian and a likeable clergyman. However there was a war on, we were reminded. Soon gossip had it that we were bound for the Shetland Isles. True enough we were put on board a little steamer 'and set off in the dark for that interesting part of life in the RAF

The war had by now reached Norway and here we were as far from Scotland as we were from Norway. The enemy had, we thought, his eyes on Scapa Flow and a likely thing was to grab the Shetlands first. Besides the Russian forces were helped with supplies which came up past the Shetlands and convoys were often protected by our aircraft on their way to the frozen arctic, and attacks were made on army forces from our units. They in turn would attack us. One night some enemy aircraft raided us with machine guns and bombers. In our huts was the usual tin hat, in his hand the usual rifle, but lo and behold he had not a stitch of clothing on. A few of us scared of what he might do, felled him to the ground, much to his annoyance. He was swearing and cursing the German Raiders, promising them a smart exit from this life, he did not know that orders had been given that no firing was allowed by ground staff.

Another little incident well remembered. One morning a discipline officer came in asking me to type a list of petty offenders for him. Looking down the list and preparing my work, he added in a much than a whisper voice "Put your name on it too". Now that wasn't fair in my view of things. So with others I lined up for punishment. Three days said the Judge. While bemoaning my fate on the second day, I heard my name called by a sergeant, he said I had to go to the Officer's Mess, they wanted me, and he was to take me there. There was to be a celebration that night in the Mess and wanted me to play the piano for them. I

explained there was the problem of the punishment to be dealt with first. Oh they said, we will soon fix that... and they did. At six that night I presented myself at the Mess. Later came the Officer's and Gentlemen. The C.O. was seated in a wheel barrow, pushed by a Squadron Leader. Then followed the troop of merrymakers with all possible equipment from the kitchen, in a merry mood, ready for a good evening. Drink is a very good way of equalising. Officers were drifting up to the piano and asking for certain songs, mostly unprintable words to a folk tune. Eventually the Officer who gave my penalty a few days earlier, came and sat next to me. He looked up and down, then "where have I seen you before" he asked. I quietly told him. He put his arm around me almost crying the words, "all is forgiven... get a drink somebody". We were the best of friends, for the rest of the night. He then ordered that a collection be taken up for me, my reward was coming, thought I. Yes a sum of 25 pounds was given for the nights work and my debt was paid to the RAF

My stay on the island was interesting, my rifle was taken away from me, seems I was such a poor shot that it would be safer for me and others if I had a Tommy Gun. So I was given two riflemen, so we three defenders were ordered to guard the beach road, to the camp. One day I was stopped by an Officer and told to shake up my ideas, and to find out the guard of the days earlier and take lessons from them. This we did, talking to one self is easy on the Shetlands. We never let on, we were the only one's holding that spot. While there I was invited to go to another island to see the seals. I did not realise it was a shooting trip, and regretted going. However since then we have heard a lot about the Canadian shooting of seals and now I can visualise the sordid affair.

The local Church asked me to play the organ at one of their services, they knew I played for the RAF Church mustering. I made many friends among the locals and was invited to their homes, which was most interesting, Especially watching the women knitting. I was given some lovely Fair Isle clothes for my son Michael, they sent them as a gift and he wore them for many years.

Another episode is well worth reporting at this stage. It is hard to believe, but anyone wanting to get off the island, had to ask the Army. The Airforce had no transport of its own. You either got a lift on one of our operational aircraft going to some mainland airfield, or tried the Army. So it was with some excitement that we heard there was an aircraft somewhere in England that we could have if we could find someone to fly it. We found a volunteer pilot and a navigator and sent them off to fly the *Thing* up to us. One day some time later, news came that our transport was on its way and we were to prepare for it. One afternoon we looked skyward and there we saw the big bird. It moved slowly across the sky towards the airfield. Then as it landed we all gave a shout of

welcome, or was it amazement. For there it was, a great big aeroplane the biggest we had ever seen. Its two little engines seeming an afterthought, stuck on its wings. We were informed it was an antique, with a top speed of 100 miles per hour, and had not done that for many years. The official name of our aircraft was Harrow. Definitely vintage. However beggars must not be choosers. It meant it could fly and would take some of us back home. I was due for some leave and being in the right position at the right time, got my name put on the list of passengers. The morning we were due to leave came and we trooped down to the aircraft. As we opened the door, it fell off its hinges. That could be tied on again, so we went inside. Believe it or not, the mice or rats had eaten some of the skin covering the frame. We had seen it fly so why worry about little things like that. We were given orders that we had to sit still when the aircraft was airborne. It was not a very stable flying machine, for when someone felt the urge to move the *Thing* did a slide or dip. One of the boys had the need to do a leak. He took his tin hat and filled it. Now with a flight like this, that is not good, on each dip or slide of the aircraft some water was spilled. A chap next to me thought it was his turn, and took the inside rim of his hat out, so as to have a dry soft part, but he forgot that little hole where the screw came from, so like the Dutch boy and the dyke, he kept his finger in the hole. The fun was on, the pilot threatened to ditch the aircraft in the sea unless we behaved ourselves. However it was with great pleasure later when we saw below us, some part of Scotland and soon we would be travelling by train.

After doing one year at the Shetlands, I was posted to 236 Squadron, Coastal Command Beaufighters. They were a fine body of men, and though they suffered high losses, were great flyers. There was always a moment in every unit that stands out. One such incident was when we lost six out of nine aircraft that left that day. The Commanding Officer and two Squadron leaders failed to return. It was the only time when I have heard aircrews complain about their leader. It seems the C.O. had not much experience of shipping attacks, which was the work our boys had. The way the experienced crews went into attack did not suit the new C.O. He wanted it done his way. The price of that venture was told in the losses we had that day. Another incident, I remember clearly is about our favourite pilot, Jimmy Lee, I had seen him take off in three different aircraft in one day, in a chase of enemy ships off France. A great man. It was my desire to have a trip with him. He called on me one day and we both got our parachutes and got into his aircraft, it was an engine test flight. We set off down the runway and got airborne safely, flew off northward and after a while he pointed down at a farm. That's where my Mother and Father live, he said. He made a circle of the farm, then climbed ready for a dive on the house. On the turn after the dive he said "there's the old lady, wonder where the old man

is?" So we climbed again and dived on the house, the turn revealed that the old man had come out and they were both waving. The aircraft was now doing its turn in a circle, one wing pointing to the sky and the other to the earth. We sailed on like this, round and round we went. The aircraft did not want to go straight and level. Each turn it was nearer the farmland closer to the cattle, they were becoming scared, and so was I. The tops of the trees were much closer as we turned yet again. Jimmy looked worried and as we asked each other how we felt; the aircraft gave one great big shudder, as if some big hand had taken hold of the tail and shaken it. The whole thing shook, like a dog shakes when leaving the water after a swim. When the shaking finished the aircraft seemed it had enough jokes for that day, and settled down for the return to base. After we landed, we shook hands for a long while, it was truly our lucky day, experts told us later. The chance of the aircraft turning either way, was a thousand to one.

There were two other flyers worth mentioning, Flight Lieutenant Gatward, and Pilot Officer Fern his navigator. These two had special training in low flying. They became experts and were chosen for a special job by the Air Chiefs. They were required to fly down the streets of Paris and shoot up the German Headquarters. This they did and get back to base, because of their skill in low flying. This was recorded with pride in the records of our unit.

After a while there came a posting of some importance. A signal came for an overseas posting. All they do is send you on embarkation leave, and dress you up in special kit. Mine was for a warm climate. I tried guessing where but gave up. I reported to the embarkation officer and was duly put on board ship. Late at night our ship slipped away from Glasgow and next morning all we could see was a line of ships, miles of them, and a few destroyers acting like sheep dogs up and down the line. After some days we sighted the North African coast and soon we were landing at Algiers. All safe and sound, thanks to the Royal Navy.

The sight and smell of Algiers is something one never forgets. There were thousands of troops and an unwelcome local population. This was the first time I had met unfriendly people like this, there was a sure hate of allied forces, and we were advised to travel armed, and never alone. The stay there was not long, but I managed to see some of the sights. My next orders were to get on board a train. Imagine hundreds of service men with their kit and rations for two weeks trying to make themselves comfortable on board a long train of cattle trucks. We were to make that mode of living for the next two weeks. The speed of the train was very erratic and slow. To amuse ourselves, there were episodes of gunfire, it was not unlike a good western film. But the strangest thing about the

trip was when the call of nature arrived. To see a lot of men doing a quick rush, dropping their slacks and then hearing the train driver give a whistle and see dozens of blokes climbing aboard their truck, with their trousers hanging at half mast, all the time mad cheers from the rest as one by one they succeed in getting on board. To see this happening brings the era of the early comedy films back to mind. However we arrived at our destination, somewhere in Tunisia. There, trucks waited to take us to our various units.

I reported to my new unit in due course, number 255 Night Fighter Squadron, at La Saballa 2. The routine jobs of the Orderly Room soon kept me busy, and it was with great pleasure I found my fellow workers, very friendly and kind. The Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Player was a Tasmanian, a very successful and popular pilot. There was one character that caused me some concern, that was the Warrant Officer in charge of Discipline. What about me that worried him I did not know, but we crossed swords quite soon. They say all Welsh Blokes have the same problem, it seems discipline is harder for the Taffy, than others. My approach was, there will come a day that this character will want something from me, then maybe, some sweet revenge. In the main it was a change and an interesting part of my war experience. One incident is worth a mention. The C.O. thought the boys deserved a bit of fun. Why not a dance. In due course one was arranged in Tunis. Trucks were made ready for transport. Drinks were arranged, or arrived from somewhere, plenty o food, a hall, and even a dance band, of sorts. But no ladies. This had to be remedied, scouts were sent out and after some problems, a few were promised. The night of the dance arrived, our boys all dressed up in their best, hair well and truly groomed, and above all, excited. Our little group from the Orderly Room, kept together and entered the hall. There the civilians sat around, and true to form, two local men to each lady, in a few minutes the situation was summed up. This was to be a drinking party, very little dancing. That is what happened, the females were scarce and scared, the wine flowed freely. With a friend I went to have a look at the outside and the air was much better there than inside, so we waited, for a climax to the evening. It came long before closing time. First a couple of our boys came out for some air, some were sick, the drunks were just thrown up onto the trucks, at least they were safe and like a damp squib the evening fizzled out. Only next morning there were many sore heads.

As the war front receded to the main land of Europe, we were given orders to move. I have never seen anything like this move. I was on duty that night, and received the orders we had to move first light. The camp was a long way from the locals, just a flat area in between hills of sand, Not a soul in sight anywhere. It was all hands on deck, for the rest of the night. At first light the

trucks started moving out. It was hard to believe, but as our truck crept away from our campsite, there seemed to be hundreds of Arabs creeping out of the sand hills, our camp was combed thoroughly for anything that could be useful.

Before leaving Tunis, I decided to see as much as possible of these foreign parts. Above all, my curiosity for seeing the Casbah became a must. These places were all out of bounds to the allied forces. However I found a Frenchman one day, and asked him about this matter. He offered to help. He was going near a Casbah during the next few days and would take me there. He came as arranged and I got into his car, I then was asked to cover myself with a blanket and lay low, while he drove to the place. Then he stopped, and I had my first view and smell of a Casbah. Having got out of the car and thanked the driver, I took stock of my surroundings and any landmarks so I could find my way back. I took a road into this village and my impressions were, I had found the worst slum in the world, the poorest people in the world, and possibly the dirtiest anywhere. There was a little boy driving the sickest cow, I have ever seen, both covered in sores, and the boy who was dirty and must have been about ten years old. He stopped at a house, so I stopped to watch, he shouted something and a lady came out holding an empty fruit tin. Into this tin the boy squirted some liquid, I could not say it was milk but the boy got his payment and moved on to the next house. Each time the cow and the boy moved a cloud of flies rose into the air.

I walked a bit further and there lying in the gutter was a human, whether alive or dead I did not know. No one cared either, the filth and degradation was total. I had seen enough and very truly smelled enough to last me a long time, so I made my way back to the roadway. Soon an American truck passed by and I got a lift back to my camp. Maybe it was fool hardy, but there it was, I did it and lived to tell the tale.

Another incident in North Africa, which will always remain in my memory. Near the camp, an ammunition train was blown up, Quite close to the train was a train load of prisoners being sent back to Algiers. I don't think fireworks ever had the excitement again for me. The sight of dead, wounded and scared humans, a train that had been blown to pieces, big heavy engines lying in odd postures most unlike the proud things that they are. An Officer came and mustered as many air force boys as he could, to help. I was with a group that took the walking prisoners and kept guard over them, until the Army took over from us. Later I saw a convoy of ships hit in the harbour, about ten ships went to the bottom, and many lives were lost, carrying ammunition by rail or ship surely was one that needed much extra courage and luck.

The next stop was at a port where we embarked for Sicily. The landing craft move was a new experience, most of the boys felt it was at least a few miles nearer home. We landed near Palermo, then a trip to the other side of the island, to Trapani. It was here an incident happened which we had lots of laughs over. The C.O. thought the troops deserved some entertainment. What about a concert party, someone said. So arrangements were set in motion. A piano was wanted. We had no intention of buying one even if one was for sale. In fact there was in our unit a club called the Baststeelers. To belong one had to have taken some thing from the locals. Often someone would come back with a door from some damaged house, or anything that would make or cook a meal. To get a piano was a different kettle of fish. A small truck was arranged one morning, four strong men and armed, were allocated to the driver, and sent on this errand, and orders, "come back with a piano or else". The story was told that they found a music shop somewhere in a village, the shopkeeper had no piano, but with some persuasion and threats, he told of a customer of his who had a piano, and still owed some money on it. That didn't worry our boys. Their job was to get a piano. They arrived at the house where the instrument was, pushed the door open, guns at the ready, true western style, and found their piano. The next was to get it out of the house and back to camp. Being armed there was no interference, and as arranged we got that far in our concert party. One of our boys had some experience on the stage as a female impersonator. There again, we must have female clothes, otherwise it would be *spoiling the ship for Ha'perth of Tar* so to speak. How and where to get some suitable clothes was a mere detail, send out Granty, he will find some, one kind friend said. So orders had to be obeyed and away I went. I met a local, who looked intelligent and a conversation was started, partly in broken English, a bit of French, a bit of Italian. But slowly the reason for my errand came to fruition. I wanted ladies clothes, yes. I wanted a lady, yes. He had a sister, yes. He would take me to her, yes. Our tracks seem to have separated somewhere, it was only clothes I wanted, not the lady who wore them. Still it was with great pride that I got back to camp, with the bundle of ladies things, complete with frilly underwear. The concert was a great success. The clothes were returned with thanks... but the piano, never was, it followed us right up to the north of Italy.

Our next move was to the toe of Italy. One incident there while on our way to a camping site. Our convoy of trucks, had somehow separated on its way through the mountains. My part of the convoy was lucky, for we had the ration truck, after all, food was a must in our movements. Having discovered ourselves lost, we decided to park down for the night, and sort things out next morning. The trucks were arranged in a ring, not unlike the old western movies. Guards were arranged, sleeping was such that our heads were to the outside of the ring and

feet to the inside. With guards patrolling, all seemed right with the world. On waking in the morning, the big shock of finding most of the men had lost their boots, was incredible. How they, the thieves got away with that haul, I will never know. No one heard anything, still nothing else was taken. Later we made our way from there and on towards Taranto.

A thing that pleased me somewhat, was the way detachments went on. Usually three aircraft were sent to cover night operations over some troop movements. There was need of someone to go along from the orderly room, and I did like that work. I was my own little boss for a few weeks. So it was, that I found myself, in an advance party sometimes. The next stop was Foggia. At this place I had a lovely experience, the Americans were in charge of the area, it was the fifth Army district. The field hospital Padre asked for my services in forming a quartet, just to do the accompaniment and coach. They had to get permission from our C.O. and this given, I was a free lance, really. I was treated very well and anything the Yanks had, I was invited to share. We did produce some good items and did a few shows on the restricted radio, and for hospital entertainment, But that was ended when our next move came on, and this was to be our last, while the war was on. It was Leghorn. I had by this time, with thoughts of demob and a return to my wife and son. The war news was Germany and Japan had reached the end and there was no air intrusion anywhere. In fact our unit, did receive a special commendation from Monty for the defeat of a fighter squadron, the last of their aircraft had been shot down, mostly by our boys. After this it was a short visit to Malta, and then the final, to demob and home. Just before Christmas 1946 I arrived back in Bristol, there was two months leave given to help us settle down to civilian life. After a week or so, our good friend Clar Berryman came to my rescue, and asked me if I would like to help him in his Wholesale Business. He needed a rest for a while and this suited me, I soon got used to calling on shops, got on well with the customers. My wife had during my absence in the services, obtained a nice little house in St. George, near the top of Plummers Hill, I can now see, I was very difficult to get on with, and there were quite a few unhappy moments at home.

There is a need now to give some thoughts on the relationship between the Grants and the Berryman families. We first got together before the war, when my wife and I carried on a small business in Clifton, Bristol. Clar had just started his wholesale business and he supplied us with Tobacco and Sweets. His business was in Brislington, on the Bath road. We became very friendly, I was a newly married man, and hailed from Wales, which Clar also had connections with when he was a boy, and had lived in Cardiff. Dorrie and Rene

got on together, they were like two sisters, and shared many private thoughts together. The Berrymans had not long been married when they had their first baby, a girl called Marrie. We spent a lot of time together and often Clar would take us to the country and Bridgwater, where Rene's and the Berryman family hailed from.

Another child was born to the Berrymans, that was Stanley, then later another son arrived, that of Wally. I think this stage drew us closer together, for Rene became quite ill and Wally was born with a stomach problem. So Dorrie was often with the Berryman family, she became Godmother to Wally, who was a 24-hour nursing case. My wife was always kind and she lavished a lot of care and kindness on this sick child. So the common bond of our four children kept the two families very close. In spite of the fact of having each our problems and both being in business, we spent as much time as we could together. So here we were, the war past and a new life, before us. Though everyone seemed very kind, the settling down was hard. Here I was working for someone I knew and one whom I honestly believed trusted me, yet still wanting some good feeling at home. Michael, now a young lad of ten years old, found his Father a difficult problem. I supposed that being on his own and having a comparative stranger taking over was difficult to his young mind. This strain on us, kept me thinking of a way out, and one day the idea of migrating to Australia. So one day I called the migration office and got the necessary papers. Dorrie and I filled the forms and sent them to London. We had decided and only have to wait for Australia House to confirm and set us on our way. For the cost of ten pounds each we were to seek a new life in a land of promise, which many of the Australians I had met during the war, spoke about. I had met a man from Perth and he vowed the land of promise was Western Australia, so I had ideas of getting there. But the main thing was, it was decided, no more wondering what to do next.

Our dream did get mixed up and twisted from what we saw as quite clear facts. When the Berryman family heard of our schemes, was the first twist. Clar, said next day, "How about a trip to London".. "What for?" I asked, well if its good enough for you to go to Australia why not us, as well. So off we went to London, more information and more papers. Our two ladies now got their heads together and they debated the merits of the proposition, and agreed to be *in it*. This also raised the question of us going out together. I wished to go ahead and find a suitable spot, but Clar, thought this unnecessary, and wasteful. There is only one way to get there now and that is to fly. I knew I could not do that, I had plans to use my bit of capital for getting set up on arrival, not spending all, just to get there. This did not deter Clar, he knew what he wanted

and that was, we all fly out together. He got the air tickets and we prepared to sell up, we put our house and furniture on the market. He did the same, and soon we were all prepared, goods were packed for shipment and would arrive soon after us in October. Our families having received such a shock, the reaction varied, and some said we were mad, foolish, and many said good luck, you will make it all right. So in October 1948 our little tribe of Bristolians became airborne, four adults and four children, all ready to turn into good Australians.

Our first job was to have a look at London before leaving England's shores. We spent a few days with my sister in Hammersmith, London, we did enjoy the Nelson Celebrations in Trafalgar Square, also a visit to two old friends I had served with in the Air Force. This brought us to the departure and a lot of my family came to London Air Port to see us off.

Our first stop was Cairo. The children were excited and enjoyed the wonders of air travel, and now they were in a foreign country. There we met up with some old memories. We had settled down for a quiet evening in the hotel for the night, when the air raid siren sounded, and it was like back to war again, the Israelis had some aircraft paying a visit to warn the Egyptians that they were asking for trouble in making war on them. However all ended well and no bombs, and next morning we were airborne again. The next stop was Karachi, Pakistan. We set off across India to Calcutta, and on the way had some engine trouble. The plane turned back to Karachi and was delayed for two days. After a short stop in Calcutta it was off to Singapore. But this was not too pleasant for the ladies and the children, the humidity was oppressive. However soon we were headed down to the other side of the world and Darwin, Australia, our first stop in the new land. The customs and more papers, then a clearance and our next stop was Sydney. The sight of the Harbour Bridge our first point of recognition, was beautiful. All aboard were thrilled, even some Australians on their way back home were excited.

Our Air Hostess, was concerned about all the passengers, and more about us. She could hardly believe we would come all this way, and have no one to meet us, and nowhere to stay. She offered to help and arranged for us to go to a place in Rose Bay, we were very grateful to her for the help and found the temporary home, most welcome. Sydney appealed to me, there were lovely beaches and warm sunshine, this came as a pleasant extra, after our cool autumn weather back in England.

However Clar had made his mind up, that Melbourne was to be our destination. So we soon got down to finding things and talking of our intentions. There were two folk from Melbourne staying at this boarding house, and they offered

their advice. We were lucky in finding these two good people. We decided to go to Melbourne on Tuesday. Now here we were showing a lot of ignorance. For Tuesday was Melbourne Cup Day. That didn't mean anything to us. However these good people gave us the telephone number of their home, in case we became stuck. We found, on arrival in Melbourne that all they said about the rush and crowds there, quite true.

We landed in Melbourne as the crowds were heading for the races, like two lost souls we wondered what was happening to us. No beds in hotels and no hope until after The Cup in fact for the rest of the week. We phoned our good friends in St Kilda. It seemed they were expecting us, and straight away invited us to their home. What a delight to find such a kind welcome, a hot meal was ready, and beds arranged for two Pommies, or new chums. Their words of advice was to make a little holiday for the rest of the week and get our bearings, then next week to try and fix getting the ladies and children down from Sydney.

This we did, a kind estate agent, did his best to find accommodation for the whole lot, and eventually he took us to Belgrave, there we found a bungalow with all mods and cons, ready to house us all, until something permanent could be found. The children loved the bush and the excitement of being in a new country and no school worries, life went by quickly. However the agent found a house and home in Silvan and arrangements were made, for a take over, walk in - walk out were the terms used. We were not familiar with this but I think we were all happy with the choice and soon settled down ready for the first Christmas in Australia.

When the Christmas Season ended, it was time for down to business talk. This we did, first schools were arranged for the children, then collecting our goods which had been shipped over, Clar and I set to talk of income or jobs of some sort. There was a general store for sale, about a mile away. But though it looked attractive, the fact of having high credit accounts, and the population in the area being so scarce, we decided to look elsewhere.

After a few weeks it seemed that living in the country meant, farming or fruit growing of some sort was the only thing for us. Clar was not in a hurry to do anything, he was going to enjoy the new found freedom and country life, besides he had determined to coax the rest of his family out to Australia, which he did, soon we had news that the whole family, including Grandma, were to fly out and join us.

This left me and my wife and son with a problem, that had to be solved quickly, so off to the city of Melbourne to try my luck, soon I discovered the lending library in Richmond. This my wife and I worked on and made good

progress, Michael went to the local Abbotsford State School, and we joined the Methodist Church, in Church Street and soon felt quite at home.... or nearly so. Very soon I took another empty shop in Victoria Street, Abbotsford and this put us on the way to getting some money in the bank. We kept in touch with the Berryman family and was hoping that Clar would find something to bring in an income, but no, he still wished to enjoy his freedom and was happy as Larry. By now we realised that our two families had to live their own lives, the book kind of life, I thought would not suit Clar, he was used to handling bigger amounts of cash, it was big business for Clar and small business for me, here we faced the facts of life. I had to start with a small capital, and I wanted to learn slowly, the kind of life the Australians lived. I had no wish to import my ideas from home in England and neglect those of my new country. I would ask questions from many folk, after all they knew the right people and the right way of doing things. The response was great, many people, came to our aid and helped by advertising the shop or introducing us to their friends. Soon fresh books were coming in daily and stock was beginning to impress my customers. They were great days, and I will ever be grateful to my dear wife for her faithful and constant support in those difficult early days of Grant's Bookshop. Everybody loved her and often folk would ask for her advice on many matters. It was not long before she took over the Sunday School at Church and became involved with many activities, in an official way, her singing was a great draw, her ability to sight read a part song was rare and for this, respect for her ability grew.



Dorrie with their son Michael - January 1954

Chapter 2

LIFE IN THE BOOKSHOP

So it was to be a life of books. Lending books is not the best way of dealing with books. This I had tried in England and found it wanting. So in a very little while, I decided to try selling books. I took a lock up shop, in Victoria Street, Abbotsford, not far from Punt Road and Victoria Street Junction. From there I really started into book-selling. I met some very well known Melbourne booksellers. Mr. Evans from Swanston Street. The Halls family from the city of Prahran, and Mr Cheshire from the City. They all offered to help me, if at any time I needed help or advice. I had some experience with sheet music and soon added that to my stock. Gradually I built up sections on my shelves. Poetry, History, Music and general literature, was added week by week. Soon I had calls from other booksellers and schools, life became very full. My mornings were spent buying books, using the Richmond place mainly for holding spare stock. For ten years I worked and built up a sound business in Victoria Street. Many students from the music schools came to me. Many friendships grew in my new venture. Jack Bradstreet and Ken Turner were among my early friends. One outstanding friend and customer was Dr. Keith Bowden, we have remained good friends for many years. Ken Hince was at this time, a school teacher and called in regularly. Also two noted men, at this time came often, they were Barry Humphreys, and Philip Adams, both young men and students. One friend that helped me a lot, was Voss Smith, he became a friend of the shop. Stan Mitchell FRS and Fred Smith, both became good friends. Both were trustees of the Museum. But among the best remembered of book lovers was Mrs Bird, who had a bookshop in Bourke Street. We kept in close touch for many years. Her problems and mine very often matched. Shoplifting and shady customers we both shared, and caused some amusement when we did meet. One incident, I would like to tell. A nuisance customer to us both, one day came to her shop, Mrs Bird was on top of the stairs, with a pile of books in her hands. She laughed as she told this story, how she waited for the right moment and purposefully stumbled, emptying her load of books on the unsuspecting unwanted customer. He never returned to her shop, which she said pleased her very much.

About this time, I met Australia's most celebrated Antiquarian Bookseller, Gaston Renard. He was a great help to me and often came and bought many books from my stock. I made many friends during those early days, and take this opportunity to thank them for their good advice and support. Among them was one Fred Smith, he lived near the summit of Mount Dandenong, alone yet

with so many of nature's friends. He loved the birds and trees of that area, Lyre Birds would come to his back door for their daily tit bits, which is a rare thing for these very shy birds. He knew families of birds and talk proudly of his contact with them. Many good friends have I taken to meet this outstanding Australian. His collection of artefacts and books were well above average for any collector. His collection of sea shells were valued highly, he welcomed visitors, it was a treat for us all.

A little incident may throw some light on the greatness of Fred, having bought a book from me one day, he checked the price of one similar in the city and found that price one pound more than mine. He wrote a cheque for that extra pound and posted it straight away, to me. He had a friend named Stan Mitchell and it remains my great pride to have known these two great Australians for many years. Stan was a geologist and a Fellow of the Royal Society, his knowledge of the crust of this earth was amazing. He had his own museum and collection near Frankston. He wrote a book on the artefacts of the Aborigines, and still highly regarded in its field. He owned a factory which made emery cloth and sand papers. But among his unusual jobs was the collecting of dust from jewellers, this was taken back to the works and the costly metals separated from the dust, and classified, then sold back to the shops.

A customer that had a great influence on the shop and me was Alec Tennent, He, after having retired came to help me in the shop. His advice and help really gave me courage, and with his and one John Perdrix a popular astronomer, decided that Grants Bookshop should move to a better location. So it was that when John Quain's shop in Commercial road, South Yarra came up for sale, that I jumped on the opportunity and soon found that part of Melbourne much more exciting and profitable. It was near the Prahran Market and with a series of good lively shops. The Owner of the premises, quite soon after my take over, died. The trustees offered to sell the premises to me, but their price was far too high and I was pleased that I turned down the offer. For three years later there came on the market a far more modern shop, much nearer the Prahran Market, I applied and got it. Collectors had by this time taken most of the specials from J. P. Quain stock, so it was all set for a big sort out, and after much hard work and many decisions, I settled down in what was to be my last shop. The landlord was Mr West and had the business next door, which seemed to blend in with my type of shop, his was a record bar.

Now I was registered as GRANT'S BOOKSHOP and found life much busier. I had many friends from the Alfred Hospital, many doctors and nurses called in, also there were friends from the American Embassy, and quite a few came from the Art Centre in St. Kilda Road. By this time the shop had attracted some

customers in other states. One very kind music lover in Brisbane, Grace MacGibbon, often wrote for sheet music, we remained good friends for many years, she told many of her friends to call and see us, when they came to Melbourne. I also had customers in Sydney and have sent lots of sheet music and books up there. The South Australian State Library used to call or write to us.

One interesting customer, was a Doctor from Sydney. It happened one day that a gentleman asked if I minded him staying in my shop for a while. He stayed all day. Some time later I got a letter from him, he wished to thank me for the day he spent in the shop, saying it was the high light of his visit to Melbourne. My wife and I were very gratified to get this encouragement. Melbourne Grammar School were good friends of the shop too. The head master Mr Brian Hone, later Sir Brian often called in and we met most of his staff and family. One incident worth reporting here. One Saturday morning the shop was very busy, Sir Brian was browsing, along with many others, when in came an elderly lady. She looked around the shop for me, I was in conversation with Sir Brian, and she hurried up to me, put her arms around me and kissed. It seemed both her and her grandson had that morning received the news that they had passed their H.S.C. exams. Her excitement so she said, came from the fact, that without our aid, she or her grandson could not have passed. I still think it was kind of her but can't think of any special aid we had given. The shop seemed to gain this kind of reputation and we were happy to help in any way we could. Another interesting happening was, a young man who had followed us and been a welcome customer for a long while, decided to get married. He and his young wife came one morning, and asked me to help them build a good home library. They left me some money and I was to put by any interesting books for them. This was done for a long while and we were certainly honoured by others like this who trusted us, in helping make a choice of books. I can never forget the feeling of expectancy I felt buying those early boxes of books. You can never tell what kind is coming in, it is always a surprise each time. Nearly all bookshops have a throw out box, all priced at sixpence, sometimes customers find a bargain there. So much of the stock you buy ends in that box, or in an opportunity shop. But there is always some little book that a customer has been searching for, and that is where our success lies. One incident, a customer was going to burn a lot of old papers one day, I called about that time, and amongst the rubbish was as early copy of a John Bunyan book. So I suppose, we old booksellers, can be classed as rescue squads for literature.

What always amazed me was the amount of knowledge, of many different kinds that my customers had. Some people make a study of the strangest

things. There was the family who loved microscopes. They would be looking for pictures of old microscopes, or information about scientists and their work, these were not the usual academic folk, just hobby people. One friend of the shop, a bachelor, who really cared for his aged mother, a very fine Australian, had a flair for horses, only their history and different types, all over the world. He was a walking encyclopaedia, and not a race goer or drinker, a fine fellow.

Another story which I treasure is, the one about a snake man. He collected venom for the University. He invited my wife and I to his home, to meet the snakes. As you enter the front door, it closed quickly behind you. Then you enter another door, and there you see big pythons and snakes of various sizes, moving around the room. It was fascinating to watch this quiet gentleman and his friends the snakes. He said, "Give me a snake before any of your cats, anytime". An American called to see him one day, and wished to buy his collection. The price offered was much more than he expected, so he took the offer. Some months later, he had an offer from an American University, they wanted him over there. They offered to take his whole family, that is, his mother and a brother, pay their fare and find accommodation. He accepted and Australia lost a valuable snake man to the United States.

Our customers came from all walks of life. One Saturday morning there were six lecturers from Monash University, all having a little meeting, or so it seemed. One of them a young man from Bristol, his wife, also a Bristolian, once lived in a street, just below us in Clifton, Bristol. We enjoyed their friendship for a long while. They eventually went to Canada. Rohan Rivett, was also a very good friend and one day he called and asked my wife if she would lend me for an hour or so. She agreed and quickly Rohan and I were heading for the city, and Melbourne University. He wanted to show me, the library being assembled in memory of his father, David Rivett, many of the books had come from our bookshop. Sir Robert Menzies said of David Rivett, "He was one of the greatest Australians of our time". His work in the founding of the C.S.I.R.O. has been written about in Rohan's books about his father's life's work. His book *Behind Bamboo* is well worth reading. Rohan himself was very popular with his talks on radio and television. Truly a very fine Australian family, his untimely death, was a sad day for us all.

One remarkable man, is worthy of mention here. He was Alec Tennent. A true Scotsman. He hailed from Edinburgh, many years ago, but retained his lovely rich brogue to the end of his days. He was an authority in metals. But above all a great reader and book lover. When his family grew up, he moved to a small flat in Hawthorn, he had just retired, and slipped away quickly, and became a back number. Wondering what had happened to him, I made enquiries, he

welcomed me as a brother, for showing an interest in his welfare. Having respect for his great knowledge of books, I asked if he would like to give me a hand in the bookshop. From that moment he was a changed man. Nine o'clock, when I opened the shop the next morning, there he was. There was a great beam on his face which I shall never forget. He set to work and with that wistful look over his glasses, asked where he should start. With a pencil and a rubber, plus a cluster under his arm, he seemed fully armed for work. His knowledge of books made me feel proud, often there were problems about prices and placing of books, we would talk about it, then Alec would decide, and that was that. When a customer had a request for minerals or metals, I would call Alec, he would explain in a professional way all they would want to know. His historical data in this area amazed everyone. What used to cause fun, he was often misunderstood, because of his Scotch brogue, The customer would call me to interpret for him. His feel for history was uncanny, Kings and Queens, wars, inventions, he had dates for almost everything. We were privileged to have his company and help for several years, until he became ill, and passed away after a very sad time with cancer.

It is the old and unusual book that attracts most people, especially second hand booksellers. The oldest and possibly most amusing I have had, is *THE PRESENT STATE OF GREAT BRITAIN with diverse remarks upon THE ANCIENT STATE THEREOF* by John Chamberlayne esq. published in London 1737. This old book has wages and salaries, crimes and punishments, persons who held special offices and their function. One curious bit is this; Punishment for Capital High Treason, in Scotland. They are put to death in the same manner as in England, Drawing, Hanging and Quartering for men, Burning for women. But... Noblemen are generally Beheaded, not with an axe as in England, or a sword as in Holland; but by an instrument called a Maiden, which is a broad piece of iron about a foot square, loaded from above by such a weight of lead that it is scarce to be lifted. At the time of execution it is pulled up to the top of a narrow wooden frame about ten foot high, and as broad as the engine, with mouldings on each side for the Maiden to slide in. About four feet from the ground, a convenience is made for the prisoner to lay his neck with a kind of bar to fasten as to keep him from stirring. Upon a sign given the Maiden is let loose, and in a moment it separates the head from the body. The Scots have a tradition that the inventor of the machine was the first that suffered by it. This is the extract from *The Story of Civilisation* by W. Durant. Dr. J. I. Guillotin upheld capital punishment in France and proposed the use of a beheading machine that would avoid mistakes by executioners, in 1789.

Another book of great interest is Vol. 6 of Tait's Magazine dated 1839. This comparison of Melbourne and Adelaide is interesting: *There can be no question, therefore, that Port Philip and the town of Melbourne is altogether a rising settlement and from the richness and fertility of the surrounding country, as far north as Mr. Ebden's old station forty miles, and westward almost without limit, nothing can prevent its prosperity... Handy men get fifty pounds a year at Port Philip with board and lodging. If the headquarters of the South Australian Colony should be decided to remain fixed where they are at present, Port Philip will soon excel it in wealth and importance.* This was well before the Gold Rush, which started in the Fifties.

Quite often I would get a call from a solicitor, to help clear a deceased estate. One call was interesting, a lady who was the very last surviving member of an early settler. She was unable to look after herself and was selling the home and the house. After completing the buying side of my job, the lady called me into a study and wanted to talk with me about some personal matter. She had her family Bible and no one to leave it to, would I take care of it for her. The date of printing was 1647, and the condition was very good.

One type of book that always was a must for me, was any book about books, collecting, printing or selling. One such volume is *a Printers & Printing Dictionary* dated 1839. The 32 pages of introduction to this work, deals with the beginnings of communication, oral and written. The writer C. H. Timperley, must have been a very dedicated man. Here is an entry, about the price of books 300 years BC.

We possess few facts respecting the price of manuscript books among the ancients. Plato who seems to have spared no trouble or money in order to enrich his library, especially with philosophical works, paid one hundred minae, equal to \$750, for three small treatises by Philolaus, the Pythagorean; and after the death of Speusippus, Plato's disciple, his books were purchased by Aristotle; they were few in number, he paid for them three talents, about \$1350. It was with some surprise that in reading this book, I discovered that most booksellers in the early days were also printers, the printer had to know a lot about the subject he was printing.

After my experience as a bookseller, I too, know that it pays to know a lot about books being sold. Some obscure book that may come in, one that is little known in the collector's field, always creates great interest, to my customers. There were many old writers who had cause and wished to publish abroad their ideas, one such book, was the *History of Sanitation*. It is said the author, almost gave up hope of ever having this published, and it was not until he had exhausted, the chances in England that he took the manuscript to the U.S.A.

and found some obscure publisher willing to put the work into print. The publishing business has to be careful and some work never gets done because of so few being likely to be sold. Most people know the bargain counter sales that go on in the big shops. It's the remaindered books that make this possible. A writer who sees his work, that maybe took a great many years to complete, dumped in a heap, at a silly price, feels downhearted and rightly so. I knew one writer who felt disgusted with the publishing world over this. The big selling book, is not always the best book. Often a book is on the market at the wrong time. When the press is giving a well known author great publicity, the little good book, just lies unwanted and maybe then lost to posterity. One lovely small book that is almost forgotten is *A Little Book of Nature* by Fiona Macleod, published in 1909. An entry facing the foreword of this book reads; *Who knows what is in the poet's Mind? The echo of the wind that was gone was there, and the sound of the rain and the movement and colour of the fire, and something out of the earth and sea and sky, and great spitefulness and tenderness for women, and children, and love of men and of birds and beasts, and of green lives that were to him not less wonderful and intimate.* This little book so packed with truths and with great kindness and thought, is a treasure. Very few have even heard of Fiona Macleod. Maybe it is not the great tomes, the big things that make life and living worth while, but only such wisdom and truth well mixed and passed on in small things by almost unknown writers. Is it not, because gold is so unique and hard to find, that people treasure this metal, even today, the world is saying, nothing is more valuable and useful as gold, hence the great increase in price. If it were common and easily found in quantity, what a different market would be found for it.

So often I have seen just one book come in, and to find a dozen customers who want it. Then how does an ordinary human like myself decide who shall have it? So it is that friends become unfriendly, but often have I seen, friendship return, such is the character of the shop. In all this I must always include the work and support of my wife, she was more than just a wife, in all respects she was half the business of the bookshop, many customers had very high regard for her opinion and guidance.

It always amazed me that when someone in the local Hotel, had an argument about something literary, they would call at the shop and have me decide who had won the bet. Once I was awarded the gift of \$10 for settling an affair between two slightly one over the eight gentlemen. It was strange that the man in the bookshop should be accepted as an authority on facts of all sorts. It did the shop good however. In one incident, an argument at Melbourne University was settled in my bookshop. The chemist, one of two in this fracas, won his

point and somehow this did help the shop, prestige wise in that place of learning. It was surprising, to me, how many librarians called at the shop. I always remember the remark by one such visitor, he came regularly, and one day, said "I like your shop, Mr Grant, it has that lovely orderly, disorderliness". I knew what he meant, and did not intend changing, the style of arrangement on the shelves.

It should be remembered that at this time, Australia had a lot of migrants from war torn Europe. I got to know some of them. One story is worth telling. A German lady called at the shop one day, she was from Berlin. Her stories of a friend, a bookseller in Berlin was always welcome. This man had apparently been trapped between the Russians and the Allies. He had to think quickly, he didn't want to be a Russian. So to be safe he arranged to send his books, or the ones most likely to offend the Reds, to a friend in the Allied sector. This he did successfully. This bookseller's name was Mr Pekel. To my amazement, this lady kept calling me Mr Pekel secondo. She called almost everyday, and we became friends. Later her son, who was a student, came to the shop. One day he told me this story: *He attended a University in Berlin, and as Hitler's time was near the end, it was an awful problem, as to who would take over first, the Russians or the Allies. During a raid, their flat was demolished, so the authority then ordered them, the mother and son into an empty flat. They didn't know that it was owned by a Nazi trooper before they went. So imagine the problem when the Russians entered that part of the city, and found this young student in a flat with a Nazi uniform in the wardrobe. Russian soldiers had orders to take all Nazis outside and shoot them. This order was about to be taken when mother came on the scene, She explained to the Russian soldier; in the Russian language, that only a few days had they been there and her son was only a student.* The Russian accepted her explanation and they were both released. The sad thing about the end of this story is, the mother always held this act of saving, against her son. His life was forever in debt to her. Even to the extent, so far as I know, that she never spoke to the sons wife, even though they did a lot for the old lady.

Another man that I met, was a lawyer, he had been in the war trials of the big Nazis. He had a lot of interesting things to say about the beastly ways of the Nazis and the Gestapo. Many of these new comers to Australia are very fine people and after these many years have proved very good for the country.

A little story regarding the German student. While in Berlin, he had a pal doing a course at the same University. After the fighting and sorting out finished, my friend migrated to Australia, with out telling his student friend when he was going. However a while later this other student migrated here also. For nearly

twenty years he sought his old friend. Eventually one day, my friend had a phone call, it was the other student. He told his story of his searching, and had almost given up. But while catching a plane in Melbourne, he thought he would look through a telephone directory for his friend. There was only one name spelt the way his friend had his. So he rang and there he was, after twenty years, and it turned out he was a dentist in Albury, while his friend was an accountant in Melbourne.

Another good friend of ours was a lady from Poland. She was Sofia Zajdow. She lived in Prahran, with her husband, a daughter and a retarded son. After a few visits to the shop, we discovered we both were fond of music. Her English was not very good at this time, and she valued our help with her speech and certain problems, with officialdom. I encouraged her to open up as a teacher of the pianoforte, this she did but found it difficult at times, often it was due to language, but my wife and myself encouraged her to persist in teaching. After a while she got more pupils and was building a reputation. However there was an advert for a pianist for a Ballet School in the city, she applied and was taken for the job. She had by this time become well known, her repertoire of piano music for ballet was above average. Later, the family moved to a lovely home, she had bought by her efforts, in North Caulfield. Both the husband and wife have had a trip back to Poland and a tour of Europe, their daughter took a degree at Melbourne University. But sad to say, the good work of Sofia has taken its toll, and now she is a complete invalid, but her wonderful work as a pianoforte teacher will be remembered by many for many years.

Another old friend is worthy of mention here, he was an elderly bachelor, Mr William James. He came regularly to most bookshops in the Melbourne area, and was highly respected. One fact always made me wonder? As he purchased a book, he would ask for it to be wrapped up, sort of special, as if it were a gift for a friend. This practice went on for many years, then one day curiosity got the best of me. Why William should be so careful in this wrapping matter. Then I found out. He lived in a big house with just a housekeeper, and had very few close friends, all the books he bought during the year, and he put in a special Christmas Cupboard in his house. Then Christmas day he would unload this cache of gifts on the carpet, and spend Christmas Day, looking at all his presents. What a lovely solution to what could have been a lonely Christmas Day.

The story goes, and I believe it is true, that in the early days of settlement in this part of Melbourne, Williams's father, was a big landowner. When I knew William, he was close to eighty years old, and I never remember him without his umbrella and very formally dressed, always the gentleman. It was rather

amusing, when one day he came in the shop and wanted to talk privately to me. Here was a gentleman over eighty, wanting to know something private. Imagine my astonishment when he asked what I thought of him getting married. He wished to marry his housekeeper, and felt that seeing she had looked after him for so many years it was his duty. But... and this was the crux of the matter, he had no knowledge of the female of the species, and how could I recommend some reading material to him. As some poet has said "Hopes springs eternal". I did my best for the old gentleman, but alas the help was too late. He died within the year.

There came to the shop one day a very old chap, over ninety, he was bothered about something he heard on the radio. Some speaker had said some poetry on air, and had said it was written by... so and so. The old fellow knew that poem, he learned it at school, he wanted to correct the radio man, and tell him he was wrong, in no uncertain words. But he wanted a copy of the poem. I looked through the stock and could not find it. I promised him I would keep a look out for it. Some weeks Later I bought a few boxes of mixed books, took them back to the shop, and quietly sat down to examine my buy. Low and behold, there was an old school book with some poetry. On examination I found the poem I was seeking. So when the old chap came in later, I greeted him with his book. He looked at it carefully and did not speak, he read the whole poem, then smiled as he gripped his tome, then words came, he said "Mr Grant, would you believe me, if I said this very book came from my old school". He proudly showed me the School stamp on one of the pages. I have never seen an old chap more pleased with his purchase in my life.

Here is another story of an old fellow. A grandfather came in one morning, he wanted a book for his grandson. He wasn't keen whether it was new or second hand. I looked through the new books, then wandered through some used books. There was a real lovely book in the used ones, which was quite old but in very good condition. As soon as my customer saw it, he wanted it. So I wrapped it up and away he went, a very pleased customer. But a week or later he returned. Mr Grant, I have come back to tell you that book I bought from you, I had bought some years ago. I asked him to explain. He had some years before bought this book for his son, when he was very young, and had marked some of the pages while reading to him. This made identification sure, and now after many years he could continue his reading of that same book to his grandson. Who knows what a story could be built up about what happens to books we love, as they pass from us to other book lovers?

Among characters that came to the shop was a Roman Catholic Priest. A very kindly man. Quietly spoken and always discreet, he chose a certain section of

the shop, climbed off the steps and sat there for hours. Often he would ask permission for him to eat his lunch in the shop, and I would offer him a cup of tea. But he loved coming to the shop, and always thanked us for allowing him to have his lunch with us. Talking of Roman Catholics, one bright young man came in one day, boldly he asked in a loud voice, where do you put your Catholic books? I answered, we only keep Catholic books. He set off quickly doing the rounds of the shop. After a while he came back, saying he couldn't find any Catholic books. My turn then came, maybe you are looking for Roman Catholic books? He was floored by this, so I introduced him to the various religious modes in this life. The Roman Catholic being only one of many, he was astounded that the Church of England was also a Catholic Church, and that one could have a Catholic taste in books and music. We ended friends but it was touch and go for a while.

Jews were sometimes a problem. There seemed to be some expectancy of trouble with them. They do have the edge on many of us by being able to use several languages. But in the main it was hopeless to expect a big spender from a Jew visitor. I did get on with several very well. One incident I remember well from my wartime experience. In dealing with paper work, we did sometimes have a language problem. On my unit was a brilliant linguist, a Jew. Strange fellow this, he had no intention of bowing to authority, so it was a natural thing to see our friend doing some form of punishment. He would not salute an officer, he would be absent without leave, all silly things that some recruits do, he would do them. Well, one time, some translation was wanted. My thoughts went straight away to our friend in trouble. Permission was given for him to help. There was no pay for him for this translation, that was not his job. He was ordered to help, and to be fair to him, he liked coming in to help, the work was interesting far more than labouring hard work he should be doing. What amused us, was he kept a note of every minute he spent doing translation work, and later submitted it to the military authorities for payment... and got paid. One incident with this young man, was when the C.O. got friendly with an American Lady Officer. He had apparently dated her, and duly arrived at the party as he had been invited. Next day, when someone asked how the party went, he replied, "Well I'm damned, do you know who took control of the lady I was supposed to be with"? "No, who did" he was asked. "None other than that B.. B.. Jew Boy". So they must have something that we non-Jews have not.

There were many times when I would be invited to a customer's home. These visits were very interesting. I think my visit to Voss Smiths home was one such time. Voss lived in a Toorak house, once owned by Lord Casey. The house is really a wonder in itself, beautiful wide staircase and great high ceilings,

everything about the place speaks of affluence. Voss being a millionaire, expense was never considered. He wished to show me his collection of art and books. I could not find words to describe the whole of his collection. The paintings on the wall were rare and must have cost a lot of money. His library was such as I may never see again. One drawer had books which had been signed by Royalty from many countries and some were rare editions. It was truly a great treat. When at his office in the city, I often called to have a yarn with him. His secretary a certain Miss Clarke, would be on watch outside his office door. Very few callers got past her. The boss is too busy or he was out, most callers got from her. But when I called she would press a button and say Mr Grant is here, and in I would go. One day I called and was asked to go in, Voss was on the phone, he motioned me to sit down, and continued his talk on the phone. He said to the other person, "Well now make your mind up, do you want it or not? If you don't hurry, I have a buyer just came into the office, who has offered.. \$60.000 for them", he winked over to me, and continued for a few minutes, when he finished, he said "you didn't mind me using you just then, did you?" "\$60.000" said I, "not likely, nor 60.000 farthings either". He was very good to us and I was invited to view his collection before it was sold up, when he moved to London. I did ask him once what kind of philosophy he had, his reply was "Wine, Women and Song".

Sometimes a trap is set, some folk like to get a valuation on their latest buy, in case they have done the wrong thing, the value of a book so often rest on how urgently one wants it. A book, part of a set, to complete a special set, often is worth a lot, but by itself very little. It is very hard to separate book buyers from traders sometimes. Some folk make a good thing from trading, some go from shop to shop, buying at one and selling at another. One shop will offer more for certain books, because they have a bigger call than other shops. Some folk buy a book because of the illustrations or the artist work, others for the good old leather bindings. Some folk couldn't care less about the contents or the subjects, while other buyers want a good reading or something that will increase in value over the years. Sometimes one is asked to value for the fact of insuring. I did have a few assessments to make for fire insurance. One I remember well, was so obvious a fraud, I had to walk out. I was sure water was poured deliberately over the books. I learned later that another bookshop had been there and would not touch the job. How lovely it is to enter a home where there are rows of books, especially the home where books are used. I remember one home where the father was a good reader, he would be reading and suddenly he would say, "I must ring Mr Grant quickly", and so I would be called to the phone to listen to something my friend had just read. A most interesting customer, and as he got older and less able to come to the shop,

would often ring for a yarn, he could quote authors by the mile, and was so thrilled by a new idea that he had discovered that day. I was called to his home after he passed away and met the family, they were all grateful for the hours of pleasure that father had spent in our shop.

I received two books of poems from a lady author, in gratitude for our friendship to her son, who was a regular caller at weekends, she always knew where he was on a Saturday afternoon and would ring to speak to her son and find out what time he would be home. The poems were very good and often have I heard them read over the radio. By coincidence this lady came from Wales. This inscription in one of her books is worth repeating here. *This book is for all the wonderful people everywhere whose lives have touched mine, and for all those who love poetry, whether expressed in words or in the beauty that is part of every passing day.* Signed: Linda Brumby.

What a lovely thought, *for those whose lives have touched mine.* Truly I have many moments when I am thankful for the many folk whose lives have touched mine, right from my childhood, through those difficult days of teen age, war years, middle age, then as the wheel turns I have now arrived at the retirement and quiet years, even with the loss of a very good friend and partner, my Wife, I still find much to be grateful for, and now is the time when true values show themselves, my Wife was worth her weight in gold, a true friend. In the battle of life when survival matters, too little thought is given to those people who are important, those whose lives have touched us, for our good. Those who know what love is all about, who know the value of kindness, forgiveness, and have never ending grace, in a community where the cry is *I Want, I Demand.* It is only at the later stages of life our thoughts and values develop. When we are young, or busy getting on, life robs us of perspective, thereby we so often miss peace of mind and happiness.

Another interesting friend was, Hans Georg. He came to Australia from Austria. He spoke English with a beautiful musical German accent. He and his young wife lived quite close to our shop. Often he would spend hours among the books and on some days would talk to the customers, who just loved to hear him speak. I knew of several who came only to have a conversation with him. He was a gifted balladeer, and was always in demand at entertainment centres. One occasion I invited him to a Church function, at a rather sedate affair in a select suburb. The music was to start at 8 o'clock, we watched the hands of the clock creep towards the hour, people were standing in groups all over the hall. At the stroke of eight, we said... start. He got his lute and started playing and singing. The hall became quiet and in a few minutes, they had all gathered around Hans, he received a great ovation. It was, I suppose a surprise to hear

this wonderful baritone voice filling the hall, and to hear and see a Lute being played.

Hans and his wife had two lovely sons, but tragedy struck them when the younger son was drowned, an awful blow to this talented young man. At the funeral were many who knew Hans, many from the entertainment world, Radio and Television personalities. I shook hands with the sad parents and expressed sympathy, the reply I got was surprising. Hans thoughtfully said, "Our boy was lent to us for nearly four years and we are thankful for them".

A well known public figure came into the shop one day, after introduction he said "You know Hans Georg, and isn't he a wonderful chap"? I agreed and then he told me his story. Hans helped with his music, a certain club for the less fortunate, it was run by a Roman Catholic Priest. Hans helped so many of our less fortunate and the priest was so impressed, that he resigned from the Church and chose to free-lance his gifts in helping those at the club. Such was the influence of this remarkable young man.

Many years ago, I had met with another great character in Bristol. He was Bill Collard, he was a truly very fine piano maker. His family were all brought up with fine craftsmen, and it was my privilege to see much of the fine work in the home. Most of the furniture was built by one or other of the family. He told a story of how his father would cut a set of piano keys by hand out of one plank of wood, and to prove the quality of work he had a part of a piano action his father had made over sixty years ago, and it was still in perfect order in spite of being exposed to the changeable climate of England. But there is one event which really did show me the genius of this friend. One day when I called on him, he had a great happy smile and when asked why the happiness, he took me into the workroom. "There" he said, "what do you think of that"? There lying on the floor was the biggest wreck of a piano I had ever imagined. It had only one leg, and that was broken, the keyboard had almost disappeared, a nest of rats had made a home in the body under the strings, a truly sad end to what obviously was once a proud piano. He had found it in an old theatre which was being demolished. I watched him take all the useless and damaged parts and send them to the scrap heap. All that was left was the sound board, and this is what the prize was all about. He said, "This is one of the finest sound boards I have ever seen". During the passing of the next year I watched that *heart of a piano* being rehabilitated into a new body. He built a complete new grand piano out of that wreck, and very proudly one day, he put it in the show room. I called that day, and tried this beautiful black grand piano, the tone was truly out of this world. What a lovely experience for me, to see how a gifted expert in his trade take the heart and build this wonderful instrument, and only because he

was able to recognise a good sound board when he saw one. If only we could all discover some truth from this example of expertise, besides the building, there is the highly skilled art of tuning, and all this before the work of the great masters can be shared with us.

My Wife's family, the Brown family were important in my life. Well Father Brown was certainly worth knowing. One day soon after I had married his favourite daughter, he asked me to walk to the city with him. It was the longest time taken for that two miles. Every few hundred yards, someone would stop and talk with him. The Lord Mayor, Members of Parliament, big business people would pull up in their cars to have a word with him. Truly a great Bristolian, was Father Brown. So right from the start good fortune, or some good Angel was continually caring for me. I have heard it said that, it is not what you know, but who you know on this life, that helps a man on the way to success. I am quite sure that I do not merit, the good fortune that has come my way, but like the sound board in the piano, hidden out of sight, and noticeable only to the ear, is some quality in all situations and circumstances, if we train ourselves to learn from every experience some truth and use it, we can be assured of some happiness and satisfaction in life.

I remember a story told to me by a well known school master. He was asked about any new ideas in learning, something modern, so to speak. He told of a time they had a vacancy for a teacher at the school. They advertised and soon narrowed the list to a few. Then down to just one. The applicant was appointed and then found a class. He had no idea of holding the attention of his class. The choice of him for the job, seemed a mistake. He was tried in another class, still not much better. The head master, checked the credentials and found that this young man really did have the best qualifications and the appointment was justified. But in practice it seemed wrong. Then one day a teacher with a very difficult class of wild teenagers, was absent. The teacher was given the chance to face this difficult class. The subject was mathematics. The headmaster's office was next door to the classroom. The head waited for the rumpus to start, he listened and even felt worried for all was quiet, more quiet than usual. Later he thought he would have a peep in the classroom and find out what was happening. To his amazement the boys were sat on the edge of their seats, listening to this young man as if by some magic, he entranced them... and it was only a maths subject, usually not the easiest way to entertainment. When the class time ended the headmaster asked the young man into his office, and found that of all subjects he really liked teaching, mathematics was his choice and most successful. In a year or two, this teacher raised the standard of Maths in this great public school to equal, any first University standard. The heart of

learning is finding interest in the subject and having a teacher who can tune into the student, as this school master once said. Learning is a complex thing. Some folk learn by seeing, others by listening, while there are some who have to feel, and touch is their medium. Some use all these, or in different proportions in different fields of learning.

I have noticed that in some books, the writers often have a difficult way of explaining their ideas, then a few pages later thoughts flow in a strong clear way. Some writers can awaken the mind by some simple anecdote, this may make the reader sit up and take notice. A millionaire in America was once asked how long and how much he invested in becoming a millionaire. He quickly told the questioner, sixpence, and told of how when passing an old second-hand bookshop he saw a small volume in the odd box. He bought the book and in its pages he read there are hidden powers in all of us, but they are only there to be used and if this is neglected, then we remain the poorer. So he used what he already had, surely this is the heart of the matter. The ingredients may vary but courage, faith, and kind gratitude, believing that only if we sow, only if we work, can we expect to have a harvest time.

So it is that time catches up with us, it was a great shock to us all when the doctor ordered me to bed for a month, I had a slight heart attack, and had to take things easy for a while. From that time I had decided to think of retiring, I had turned the 65 mark and rather than wait until tragedy struck, we would prepare for leaving the bookshop. After some disappointments we found a buyer and bought a house in Ringwood, so it was the end of a phase of our lives.

Soon after coming to Ringwood, my Wife thought she would call on the local doctor, regarding a lump on her neck. This started about three months after retirement. The doctor asked her to go to Box Hill Hospital and have the lump tested. The sad news was, it was malignant, and then started four very sad years, a number of operations and much suffering, many visits to the Peter MacCullam Clinic, they did their best for her, but alas in July 1978 came the passing of this Great Lady, a loss to us all. Though she suffered so long and very badly, she never complained, and I am sure the 23rd Psalm, *The Lord is my Shepherd* was her main comfort.

However there was one great event in the year before she passed away. In 1977 she said she would like to go home to England for a trip. The hospital gave her three months away from treatment, and off she went. It turned out one of the great events of her life. I am sure she made use of every minute of her time, and letters I received later, showed that her visit worked wonders. Old friends came from far and wide, some she had not seen since before the war. Of course all

her family gave her the most welcome, but even family on my side treated her like a Queen.

So now I sit among my books and enjoy them, a few friends call and share my little pleasures with me, and I am now content to stand by, while others make changes in the life of this city. Australia has been very kind to me, many Australians have I to thank for their kindness to my Wife and myself. Our hope has been that we were able to give back to others what others have given to us.

Chapter 3

WE'LL KEEP A WELCOME – REVISITED

This chapter appears to have been written some time after the first two, and after Dorrie's death. In this chapter Sidney writes of himself in the third person – it's as if he was an observer of his actions in these later years of his life.

To visit the Old Country, the land of your birth, to recall childhood memories after thirty six years, is worth noting, or as has been said, worth writing home about. It happened that an elderly Sister of nearly eighty years of age, paid a visit to her Brother in Australia. She lived in a busy little place called Talbot Green, in the Vale of Glamorgan, her Brother lived in Ringwood, Victoria, Australia. In the year of 1984 these two met, there was much emotion flowing at this meeting, at Tullamarine Airport, or as some say Melbourne Airport.

There was talk of days gone by, of happy days.. and sad days, above all, memories of Mother and Father. Also of our brothers and the other Sister, Lu, who was very ill. The visitor from Wales had lost her husband and the Brother had lost his Wife, so both had much in common. One big difference was, while the visitor had five children, the Australian had only one boy. She had many grand-children, he only two. There was a lot of questioning regarding this new generation, both were very proud, and with good reason, all were healthy and doing well in the world.

It was natural that a family re-union should be talked about, nothing doing, says the Melbourne chap, he was set, and happy to live as he did travelling to the U.K. would unsettle him and life would never be the same when the trip was over. However a mild threat from the son, who lived in Sydney, put paid to the status quo of the Melbournian. So it was arranged that passports and travel arrangements were made and on 18th March 1984, this brother and Sister set off by British Airways to Great Britain. It was a lovely trip and good for them both to have each other's company. There was a stop at Sydney for an hour, then Singapore, a short trip to Kuala Lumpur, 300 miles. From there to Muscat, for fuel and change of staff and finally they were able to look down on Europe. It was not long before a voice announced that in a short while they would land at London Airport.

It was 7.45 am. when the plane landed and very quickly they were through customs and looking through the place where the public meet the travellers, quite soon, they saw arms waving, and excited relations rushing to meet the

travellers. Soon they were on their way to Wales, along the great new highway called the M4. This road goes from London to West Wales, and misses the many interesting little towns, it is one of the busiest and is for people who want a point A to point B kind of travel. It was with a great feeling of here they were at last, when the sign came into view, "YOU ARE NOW ENTERING WALES". They had crossed the Severn Estuary by the beautiful new bridge, Severn Bridge, and were headed for Newport. The highway passes the edge of that town, and soon the signposts were showing Cardiff distances. Soon they had a lovely view of Castle Coch, a medieval castle on the right hand side, the sun made that look a picture postcard, and one could be forgiven for thinking, they were now in Germany or Austria. A few miles further they left the M4, and were on the branch road to Llantrisant. This town soon came into view, it spread like as if a sower had just sprinkled it over the hillside. A mile or so, the village of Talbot Green came into sight. They were home.

One would expect these two would have been very tired, after the long plane trip and now the long car trip, but no, there was so much to talk about. The driver from the airport had arranged a welcome meal, with his Sister Alma and her husband in their new home. So there they were, Mother Ethel, eldest son Emlyn and oldest daughter, Alma and this new fellow Sid from Australia, all excited in Pontyclun, the hometown of their Mother and Father. This is a lovely unspoilt village only a mile or so from Talbot Green.

The village has four main Churches, a Church of England, Methodist, a Baptist and Independent. Two pubs and a school make up the main buildings. In time past there were mines. Now they had closed, the Llanlay Colliery and the Iron Ore mine at Llanharry, this village was quite small but was much bigger than Pontyclun and Talbot Green. Besides the mines, once there was a Tin Plate works, and an Iron Foundry, close to these was a large timber joinery. All these were gone, only a tumble down wreckage of premises stand in their place.

During the next few days, hope came back as it was discovered that some new works had come track to the district. First in importance was the Royal Mint, which had been moved to Talbot Green. Then along the Llanlay Road was to be seen several new factories, the same was seen along the road from Pontyclun to Llantrisant. So change had really come to the valley.

The rest of that week was a settling period, however when the weekend came, there were visitors from everywhere. Emlyn arrived from Doncaster, his Brother Alan and daughter came from Essex, Clive arrived from Wixford near Stratford, Win and David, Andrew and Linda, their children Rachel and Matthew, Win and Haydn with their two adopted daughters Helen and Clare. Allen and Sue, Clive, Arthur Perret and his wife Bronwen, and also other

friends. Last but not least was Brother Leslie and his Wife Joan, from Leamington Spa.

The party went on for a long time, there were speeches of welcome and some singing and lots of photographs being taken. Truly a memorable occasion and could not have been improved in any sense, the food and drink was the best. There is sung in Wales a very popular song, "We'll keep a Welcome in the Hills", this day proved beyond doubt that the song is true. So it was, that time came when the gathering dispersed. That first for weekend was a fine start what turned out to be the best holiday one could ever wish for. During that first week, Alma and David called and took Ethel and Sid for a trip to Bridgend. This is a busy market town, about ten miles from Talbot Green. To the west, there are a number of important factories, and is the centre of travel to seaside places like Porthcawl and Ogmore by Sea, also many historical spots are found in the area.

During the coming week, arrangements were made for onward travel, to visit the older and sick ones of the family. Before moving on a visitor arrived, my cousin Leslie, on my Mother's side, as is usual in Wales it is common to mention people as if attached to a place or town. This cousin was known as Les Argoed, for that was where his parents lived when the families were all young.

On the Wednesday of that week, bags were packed and the colonial visitor boarded a bus at Talbot Green for Cardiff Railway Station. He was off to see his other Sister, Lu and Brother Bert. The train journey from Cardiff to Southampton is well worth the price and the time. Trains on these long trips are I25 Inter-city trains, and truly it travels through some of the finest country in England. It called in Newport, then Bristol, which is a city full of history, John Cabot sailed from here, Mr Plimsoll who brought about the line around ships, to stop overloading, St Mary Redcliffe Church and Bristol Cathedral. In the Hotwells district now lies the famous GREAT BRITAIN the first fully made iron ship, a ship which sailed in the early days to Australia, and brought many men who have brought fame to both England and Australia. Not far away from the ship, is the famous Suspension Bridge and river Avon which leads down to the Severn Estuary at Avonmouth and the Docks.

After leaving Bristol it is not long before the train travels through the old Roman city of Bath. The wonderful buildings in Bath are well worth a visit, the beautiful terraces of houses built many years ago, the Roman Baths, the whole atmosphere of the city is impressive. The weather had certainly improved and there was a lot of sunshine on the way down to Southampton.

The important railway of Eastleigh near Southampton was the stopping place for seeing Brother George. He was waiting at the station and showed much affection to his almost forgotten Brother Sid. We caught a bus to his home, and there awaited more welcome from Queenie and a warm meal with lots of talk of old times.

Next day Brother Stan came down from Oxford and more welcome was shown. Here were three brothers, Sid, George and Stan, all retired and as such can be called, pensioners. They soon organised the visit to the Sisters home at Colden Common, only a few miles away. It was a sad sight that met them, Sister Lu, had had a stroke and was unable to move without help. We also had great difficulty in conversing, but Ron her husband made his visitors very welcome. During the visit, Sister Lu managed to recall her visit to Australia and had a laugh at remembering the Bookshop that Brother Sid had in South Yarra.

Having seen Sister Lu, it was time to visit Brother Bert, who was also not well. He lived in Tadley near Basingstoke. So travel was on again. Our traveller was met at Basingstoke by Beryl the daughter of Bert. She took him to Tadley on the bus. It seemed that both Brother George and niece Beryl had managed to get their cars smashed up about the same time, hence the bus travel. We stayed the night at Bert's, returning to Brother George next day to meet his daughter, son and two grandchildren, Chris and Benj. Had a very satisfactory day with the two boys. Played games including a doubtful game of Monopoly. Anyway it was a successful day, Sandra their Mother and Tony did a lot of work on the driveway. It seemed that these two are good at repairing and altering the house. No wonder Brother George thinks highly of his daughter and family.

A trip was organised to Winchester on the Monday, it was indeed a remarkable place and has much to commend it. It was the first Capitol of England, and has some remarkable buildings, and a perfect gateway to the walled city. Also here can be seen the Round Table of King Arthur. Truly a must for any visitor to England.

On Tuesday the 3rd of April it was decided that Brother Stan should get a chance to show the visitor his place. It's a very impressive ride to Oxford, through some of the most beautiful countryside. One could not help thinking how lovely it was to have relations in so many different parts of England. Of all the homes, up to that moment, it was Brother Stan's that took the biscuit, so to speak. A very impressive house on two and a half acres of land, on the outskirts of Oxford. All the buildings were impressive, large imposing frontage, after quite a long driveway. A very solid looking place as seen from the outside. When one enters the house, that too is imposing. The majestic stairway, with marble lamp standards, very large stairway with plenty of room at the top as a

landing. Then several bedrooms leading off. Truly here is a mansion. The garden was immense from any standard. It had a summer house, which would make a home for some folk. On the edge of the estate was an old cottage, on the property were some very large and beautiful trees. Along the back edge was the vegetable garden, truly a show place for the family.

On the 4th April, a visit was arranged to the city of Oxford. Quite a remarkable place with its many colleges and truly a city of learning and held in high esteem all over the world. There you see the Bridge of Sighs, and many famous buildings. It seems that the whole area has something for the visitors, including Blackwell's Bookshop, The following day came the visit to Woodstock and Blenheim Palace. Both these places have great histories, the Duke of Marlborough and Sir Winston Churchill and links with Kings and Queens of England. The weather had turned quite cool, in fact cold would be a better description.

April the 6th was time to visit Gladys Brown. This was a special moment in the travels of our visitor. His Wife Dorrie had only one Sister alive, and that was Gladys. There were seven children of Father Brown and Gladys was the only one left in Bristol of the family. So away to Bristol via Didcot. He was met at Temple Meads station by Gladys and her son Alan. It was an emotional meeting. There were many tears and hugs and on the way to Downend, on the outskirts of Bristol, these two held hands, saying very little. In the imagination of the visitor was one of his departed Wife Dorrie. How alike were these two Sisters, not in looks, but in the field of thought and emotion. If there is a very high spot in this visit, it must be the meeting of two kindred minds, like this.

Next day Alan called to take them all out for the day. They were taken around old Bristol, a real sightseeing tour. Included in the tour was a visit to where Sid and Dorrie once lived. The shop in Clifton Road still stands today, newly painted. Before the War they moved from this shop across the road to another shop. There is a new building on this site as the old shop was demolished during the War. A five hundred pound bomb had put the Grants shop out of action. With their home gone, Dorrie and son Michael went to live with the Browns in Speedwell Road, while our visitor had joined the Royal Air Force, for the duration of the War.

A very important evening was spent at a very old cafe in Bristol. This building was named Ye Llandoger Trow, it has association with Treasure Island and is dated from 1664. It is in King Street which is one of the most famous streets in Bristol. In the same street is the Old Vic Theatre and other interesting buildings. The name Trow means a flat bottomed boat, which Captain Hawkins used for trading between Llandoger on the river Wye and Bristol. It seems that

Daniel Defoe stayed at this Hotel when he visited Bristol and was quoted as saying that Bristol was the greatest port outside London. There is a story about the 'Black Ceiling'. A certain widow kept this inn at one time, and in its normal state was decorated with scantily clad ladies. However the widow was annoyed that sailors staying at the inn, looked at these figures instead of looking at her, so she painted the ceiling black to cure those bad habits. Part of this building was destroyed during the blitz on Bristol, but was restored in 1962. Much of Bristol is altered from pre war days, and on returning to the city, the visitor found getting around very difficult. During this visit the camera came in good use and photos were taken of the place where Michael was born, and where the family lived before coming to Australia.

A call was made on old friends, one is worth mentioning. Else Evans, she was the daughter of Bill Cox, a colourful member of the Bristol City Mission Silver Band. It is said that he was once the drummer, and on the march one day, he, being somewhat short in stature, ended up in a different street from the rest of the Band, he enjoyed this joke about himself. What is of importance too, is that this Bill Cox was the companion of Albert Grant, Father of our Australian visitor, when they both migrated to the U.S.A. as young men. They settled in Colorado where Albert Grant had two brothers who had migrated sometime before, the elder Brother being the manager of a coal mine in Rockvale Colorado. This lady Else Evans was the last of a large family of Father Cox.

On the 11th April it was a very cool day, another trip back to Pontyclun and Sister Ethel. This time a visit to the family grave at Llantrisant Cemetery, weather did improve and next day was warm. On Saturdays a market is held at Talbot Green, people come from far away for the many bargains at this open air market, it is held all day, and many vendors come from far away India, Pakistan, anywhere except Wales. It's very colourful.

Monday morning it was more travelling. Off to Cardiff then another bus down the M4 to Swansea. Met some friends who had visited Australia and were Sisters of an old neighbour. This part of Wales is very hilly and industrial. The importance of this visit was to find something about Keith the forbears of Dr. Bowder, who had many years ago lived in Landore, near Swansea. After much wandering and many questions of many people, the search ended well. Since returning to Australia Dr. Bowden has had letters from relations in Wales. All his family seem pleased with this renewed connection with their family in Wales.

The 18th April was the return to Sister Ethel in Talbot Green. The temperature had improved to 17 degrees Celsius. Next day Alma and David took us to Porthcawl. We had tea and enjoyed looking around the beach and town, a very

enjoyable day. We saw the open cut coal mines near Llanharry and managed to get some good photographs on this trip.

Many invitations came for visits to old friends, but one was more important than others, that was the one from Hampton, an old friend Florrie Reeves, her maiden name, married name of Owen. The Reeves family made Sid feel at home when he first left the valleys, and worked at a local mental hospital. So on the 21st it was off to London, on the Cardiff to Paddington express. Change in Paddington to Waterloo, then a train to Hampton. London, there is nowhere else like it. The crowds on the underground trains, the great number of tall double decker buses, by the hundreds all hurrying somewhere and in endless streams, traffic in such apparent disarray that bewilders the visitor, it's all breathless. Flo and her daughter Eileen were waiting again a lovely reunion. We then met her son, Derek and found this little family of three living in fine harmony in a pleasant part of Hampton, near Bushy Park. The memories that flowed back into the Australian visitor's mind were many. He had walked, cycled much of this area as a young man of 21, his first experience of life away from home was in this district of Kingston on Thames, Teddington and Hampton Court. He had played the organ in the Baptist Church in Pontyclun and here in this district he once again played the organ in Teddington Road, Hampton Wick Baptist Church, and now he was once more a young Welshman finding his way in life. Memories are wonderful things.

One memory of punting on the river Thames is worth recording. A gang of young fellows, all staff from the Hospital decided to take a day on the river. A punt was chosen and the adventurers got in, too many it seemed, so volunteers were called to disembark. Then the brave men were chosen to do the work of punting. They made many near misses to the other river users, including some steamers full of pleasure seekers. It seemed that driving a punt in a straight-line course was not one of the boys strong points. So amidst screams of "*look out*" and "*careful*", plus abuse from both sides of the river, this punt load of duty staff, strayed from one river bank to the other and eventually landed in Kingston on Thames. This group of men were a very find band of young men, making life colourful for themselves and others. Between them they had formed a concert party Band. They adopted the title of "*The Seven of Spades*". In that troop were several very good singers from Wales, and one good violinist from Ferndale, in the Rhondda. This all happened during the great depression of the Thirties. One talented character should be mentioned, a young man with great ability in stage craft. He organised programs and wrote scripts, chose music to accompany the shows, truly one that could have made a name for himself. However he was found dead in bed one day, with heart failure.

During this stay there were many pleasant walks through the parks and gardens of Hampton Court, and visits to Kew Gardens. A trip to Richmond Hill and tea near the famous Star and Garter Home for Soldiers and Sailors. Richmond is well worth a visit by overseas travellers. London buses are just the right thing for sight seeing, they seem to go everywhere. The trip from Hampton to Hammersmith Broadway is great. To sit and watch the traffic in the Broadway is bewildering, buses all mixed up with people, bicycles, and anything that will move. Just one mass of struggle to get from one traffic jam to another traffic jam, this is real experience for any visitor.

It is useful to have a base and our Australian returned to his Sisters in Talbot Green, ready for their week with Brother Les and Joan. This had been arranged well before leaving Australia. It was to include the special event of Shakespeare's Birthday. The weather had by now greatly improved. It was so good that, Brother Stan invited the visiting Brother to his home and offered to take him to Leamington Spa and there to meet Sister Ethel, who had travelled on her own from Talbot Green. The trip was one of great importance, which included a visit to Abingdon, a place filled with interest, and lovely views. The road led to many small villages and one was unusual. It was called Great Tew, all the houses were thatched roofed. A place which could be called a photographers heaven. The name Tew is seen at other spots in the district and it was discovered that the name came from the days of the ancient Britons and was a name given to one of their Gods. There is a sign post near Great Tew, with several villages named Tew.

The welcome for all the visitors to Brother Les, was the usual full expression of belonging to the Grants. Lots of talk and introductions. It is not fair to speak of comparisons when visiting families, but certainly Brother Les has a lovely home and house. The district is very good, and Leamington Spa is well worth a visit, there are beautiful terraced homes, with the air of quality about them. Some very fine parks and a good shopping area, besides many historical towns not many miles away. This part of England is well noted in our history books, places like Leamington Spa, Warwick, Stratford on Avon, and the home of the world's most famous bard, William Shakespeare. There are landmarks where famous battles were fought during the civil wars that plagued England in the 1600s. Not far away from Leamington is the city of Birmingham. That place and Coventry saw much activity from the Second World War, besides wars of other times.

The great event for everyone is the celebration of William Shakespeare's birthday on the 23rd April. This day the visitors arrive from all over the world to see the great march. Embassy's and schools, academics from far and wide

gather to pay homage, the grave is decorated with flowers, the many gardens and buildings decorated, bands and dancers arrive, in fact it the is as if Bard was arriving that day, from his resting place. The many famous houses, such as Ann Hathaway's Cottage and Dr. Hall's are a must to all visitors, the church and the school should be seen by all. Above all, many folk like to see the raising of the flags of many nations, including those from the eastern block, truly a United Nations affair.

A place that has special attraction for photographers is Bourton Bassett, beautiful is an expression that fits this spot. Little bridges over a stream that runs down the middle of the road, almost, wherever one looks, the desire to capture the scene and take it home, is very strong. Warwick is another grand place, with lovely old buildings and its famous castle, a visit to the Leicester Hospice, which has a very pleasant tea room, this building was built in 1571. That is one year later than the Good Queen Bess, Elizabeth the 1st was anathematised by the Pope and only seven years after the birth of Shakespeare in 1564, and the death of one of the most well known artist and sculpture the world has ever known, Michaelangelo, and added to this period must be the famous voyage of Drake around the world in 1577, This is a great era for those interested in history and surely this part of England is a good place to stop and wonder at it all.

Footnote

Dorrie died in September 1978, and was buried in Springvale Botanical Cemetery. Sidney died in 1984, and was buried with Dorrie.

