

THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES

FROM THE PAST

Chapter 1

I am sitting in a hotel room in a town called Almetyevsk. The town is situated in the state of Tartarstan, approximately 1200 kilometres from Moscow. The temperature outside is minus 30 degrees centigrade, the window on the outside is so thick with ice. It is almost impossible to tell night from day by trying to look through the glass. It is not really possible to go out in the evenings, so instead I am sitting here in this silent room and letting my thoughts drift back through the years. As the memories start coming back, I realise that my life has been quite exciting with a great amount of travel. The further I drift into the past, the more I feel the urge to put on paper these memories, as already many are becoming difficult to recall. At the start it was my intention to write only of my travels but once I had started I realised that my life and travels were so inter-mixed that I would have to write about both. Why not travel back with me through the years, you may find my writing, interesting, amusing, or you may have had similar experiences. Perhaps reading of my memories will cause you to think back in time and gain happiness and amusement from the memories you recall. The same happiness and amusement I have found by looking back into mine. I was born in June 1944 at Great Yarmouth, my parents were normal working people who although they had very little money to spare always ensured that we children were well fed and clothed even though it meant they often had to go without some of the things they would have liked. I had two brothers, one two years older and one two years younger. I would not like to say that we always agreed with each other and never teased and scrapped as I am sure most children do with their brothers and sisters. Having said that we, still had a great deal of fun together. My early childhood was spent doing all the things that were wrong, such as scrumping ie:- Pinching apples and pears from orchards around the area where we lived, it was more the excitement of not getting caught by the owners than actually needing the fruit that made it so much fun. We also spent many long hours in the timber yard playing among the timber and building dens etc. and of course there was the cattle market, with its large variety of animals for sale. We would spend many hours roaming the market looking at the animals. There was such a variety ie:- cattle, pigs, sheep and much more. To us at the time it was great fun. These places I speak of no longer exist, with the passage of time all have disappeared. Today where they once were are now Superstores and Industrial Estates. One of my best childhood memories has to be walking along the river Yare when the Scottish drifters were in port, even today I can still remember all the different smells and the noise of the gulls. How I remember going from boat to boat saying "mister have you any fish please" and of course at that time the fishermen usually say yes "come aboard, take what you need", I think that during the fishing season our main diet must have consisted of herring,(sometimes known as silver darlings). Today the fishing industry of Great Yarmouth is a distant memory from the past for those who remember.

In 1953 Great Yarmouth was flooded, the areas most affected were Southtown and Cobholm plus Gorleston-on-sea. Unfortunately we were the worst hit in Southtown. At the time we lads thought it was great fun, as the water level rose we all had to move upstairs. The level kept

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rising until it was over four feet. It did not stop rising until the level was only three steps from the top of the stairs. We had very little food and the only water we had to drink was from the hot water bottles which fortunately our mum had put in the beds earlier. After three days the police arrived in a rowing boat. They had a small ladder and with their help we climbed into the boat and were taken to dry land. We were fortunate in that our parents had friends in the town and we were able to stay with them until my father and older brother had cleaned the house up enough to make it liveable again. However it took many years for the house to dry out and was quite costly in the years to follow. It would be impossible today to imagine living three days and nights, surviving on two tins of sprats and water tasting of rubber but somehow we did.

It was during these early years that we joined the 5th. Great Yarmouth scout troop of which our father was scoutmaster and later was to take over as group scoutmaster. It was a great troop to be part of in those days and the activities were many and varied. We would regularly camp at Fritton and Herringfleet which were the main two sites locally that the scouts had the use of. Many happy days and weekends camping at these sites, we would cycle to the sites and our father who had a small van at the time would bring the camping equipment. Many of the crafts that were to stand us in good stead over the years I am sure were learnt whilst we were in the scout movement. Although I should mention that though we had some great times camping, things did not always go to plan.

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Through my younger years there were many events that happened but one that has stayed in my mind is my first solo camping trip. Friday evening I packed my camping gear on the back of my bike and off I went. Not too far only to Fritton Woods where the camp site was. All went well, pitched the tent, had my evening meal and a wander through the woods and along the river a really great night among the trees, the moon bright in the sky and of course only the night sounds of the countryside. One twelve year old away from home (great). However my happiness was not to last. Next morning I woke early to the sound of the birds singing in the trees, got up, washed and started to cook breakfast. Another ideal day was ahead of me so I thought, however it was not to be. I need to explain that I was cooking over a wood fire and my seat was a log. Disaster struck, the frying pan was on the fire and the eggs were cooking nicely, I got up to get some bacon, when I returned to the fire and sat down my knee caught the frying pan and tipped the hot fat over my right hand (in those days we used lard for frying, there was no cooking oil back then). I was in agony, imagine a twelve year old on his own what a disaster. I do remember screaming my head off and running in circles, don't ask why, I was in pain. I ran down to the river and there was a boat going by. I shouted and the boat pulled in to the river bank. When they saw the state of my hand they took me on board and to St. Olives which was

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the nearest village. They then called an ambulance and off I went to the hospital. The burns were worse than I had realised however there was a happy ending and a lesson to be learnt. The burns did heal and the lesson is to never go camping alone. Another incident which comes to mind (once again Fritton) was the time I was camping with my brothers and as we wandered through the woods, it was a bright sunny day and we were having fun, as kids do.

My younger brother decided to climb a pine tree, it was tall with spiky branches but he was sure he could do it. Another disaster, he almost reached the top when he came sliding down, catching every sharp branch on the way. His chest and legs were a mess, blood everywhere, he appeared to be cut to ribbons. He was in a lot of pain (so he said). My older brother and I were stunned for a moment, what had happened was quite a shock and took a little understanding. We knew we had to get him to hospital but how, he couldn't or wouldn't walk. I really do believe some of the stunts we got away with in our youth were mad. However we had to get him to the Fritton Decoy which was on the main road (no mobiles back then). We had learnt with the scouts that it was possible to make a stretcher with two long poles and if you took off your jackets and buttoned them around the poles it would make a temporary stretcher and so that is what we did. Perhaps not the best plan we ever had but it worked. I don't remember how far we had to walk, however it was a hot sunny day and we seemed to walk forever. I believe it was no more than four or five miles but it seemed forever. However we did make it, not sure how but we did. All ended well.

I would not want anyone reading of these isolated incidents to believe that life was full of them as that was not the case. We spent so many happy times camping there, not just alone but with our parents and also the scouts. These are two isolated incidents that come to mind. Why is it that as time goes by such memories come back where as the happy times seem to fade away. It is now time to move on. As the years went by there are many incidents which are not in my main script and I need to try and recall. Some will come back, others are lost forever.

One thing I have not spoken of are the cans of malted milk and cocoa, these were war surplus. How we came by them I really don't know, I believe we within the scouts must have had a contact although I don't know who and that is probably for the best. The cans had a centre core and if you pieced the side then prised off the cap and lit the centre core with a match you would have hot milk or chocolate in less than 2 minutes and it tasted really great. It is one of life's mysteries where it came from. There is no better way to spend an evening than sitting round a campfire after a hectic and tiring day and believe me after a day out at our age we really were tired by evening and welcomed the chance to relax, I suppose it could be said we led a simple life, happy and we interfered with no one.

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I am briefly returning to our way of life as I feel I have skipped a great deal of the serious and fun side of our lives when young, mainly the way we lived. It will be hard for those born in later years to understand the way we lived as today there can be little comprehension of the times we grew up in or the way in which we lived.

We had an outside toilet which was fun (Ha! Ha!) particularly in the depth of winter. Imagine bursting for the toilet and having to walk through the ice and snow to get there and shivering and shaking in the cold Brrr, not very pleasant but normal. In really cold weather the water would freeze and we would have to use a bucket of water to flush the toilet, whoever flushed the toilet would then have to take the bucket into the kitchen and refill it then return it to the toilet ready to be used again. There was no central heating only a coal fire in the sitting room which we would all crowd round, hands held out towards the fire just to find a little more heat if that was possible. I remember being hot in front but my back would be cold and I mean cold. Bath night was Saturday, the zinc bath hung on the garden wall and had to be brought into the kitchen. In the kitchen there was a gas copper (this was for heating the water and had to be filled using a pail, bucket to many of you, the difference between a bucket and pail was that a pail was enamel and a bucket was galvanised which meant the pail was more hygienic) I don't remember how many times the pail had to be filled at the kitchen sink and emptied into the copper before it was full but it would have been quite a number. The gas ring under the copper was lit and left to heat the water which would take 2 or 3 hours. Whilst the water was heating mum and dad would walk over the bridge into the town to do the shopping, this would happen whatever the weather (rain, snow sleet or hail it made no difference, mum and dad worked Monday to Friday so the weekend was the only time the shopping could be done). Shops back then did not open on a Sunday and there were no fridges or freezers for storing foodstuff. I do remember that there was a meat safe on the garden wall in a position where it was always in the shade. The meat safe was a wooden box with a mesh door to allow air to circulate (maybe it could be said it was the first type of fridge). Once again I am getting side tracked, back to bath night. When mum and dad got back from town mum would put the shopping away and dad would get tea ready After tea he would fill the bath, once again the pail was used and then we would get our weekly bath It was not possible to have clean water for each of us so we would all bath in the same water (when I say all I mean us three children). There was no argument about the order in which we got a bath. Bryan my older brother was always first, I was second and my younger brother Frank was last. I should mention that while we were getting our baths dad would refill the copper so he and mum could get a bath after we had gone to bed. Bath night over dad would clean the bath and hang it back on the garden wall until the next time.

I have already mentioned that mum and dad worked all week and so Sunday would be another

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busy day. We would get up have breakfast and the day would begin. The copper would once again be filled and the gas ring lit. While the water was heating mum would prepare the dinner which on a Sunday was always a roast with Yorkshire pudding (as I got older I would help prepare the dinner and by the time I was 12 cooking the Sunday dinner became my job which if I am honest I enjoyed doing). Whilst mum was cooking the dinner we boys and dad would do the cleaning. I really aren't sure whether we were a help or a hindrance but we had fun. Once the dinner was cooking which would take time the water in the copper was hot and it was time to do the washing, all the bed linen and clothes were put in the copper with washing powder although if my memory is good in the early days it was a kind of soap. The washing powder I can remember is surf before that it was soap which was rubbed into the washing, however does it really matter. I don't remember how or if the clothes were rinsed, it was a long time ago. Out in the yard was the mangle, it stood in the corner under the window of the sitting room. When the washing was done it was time to put it through the mangle and hang it out to dry. What happy days. We also had the scrubbing board which also hung on the garden wall. Mum would check the washing and decide which needed to be scrubbed, then the fun would start. Us boys would turn the mangle whilst mum put the washing through, by dinner time it would be done. We took it in turns to turn the mangle, after all we were young and it was hard work but believe it or not it was also fun. It would seem from what I have written that life was a chore, that is not so we had a lot of fun. Once the washing had gone through the mangle it was hung out to dry, job done. Sunday afternoon was a time to chill all the work was done, there was no TV back then (how did we manage). After Sunday lunch for a moment time stood still. We all sat around the fire, hot fronts and cold rears but that was life. Back then families were families and stayed together can that be said today. I think not. When I say families I mean uncles, aunts, grand parents and great grand parents also cousins and nieces, all lived within the same area. It was quite normal for families to live within the same area, in my case we all lived in Southtown and Cobholm, two areas close together in Great Yarmouth.

Most evenings were spent listening to the wireless and playing table games such as cards, they were a great favourite, there are so many games that can be played with a pack of cards but enough, time to move on. Before I do I must mention the Archers, it was on the wireless every night and god forgive anyone who dared speak while it was on, to do so would be a crime and so we all sat in silence until it was over.

Last I should mention the GUZUNDER, what is it some will ask. It is a chamber pot why is called a Guzunder because it goes under the bed. When we were kids there was no way we could get to the outside toilet in the night so we had chamber pots under the beds, every morning before going to work our dad would come round with the pail and empty the pots from under the beds. On a Saturday he would take the pots outside and wash them out ready for use the following week. Some will say having read what I have written that we were dirty and must have been unhealthy which was not the case, it's just the way things were back then. Last but also to show the way we lived, personal washing was carried out at the kitchen sink. At the side of the sink there was a soap tray and towel and that was where we washed every morning when we

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woke up, how we all managed I really don't know however we did. There were no bathrooms back then. Today what you accept as normal did not exist in the days when I was young.

I don't ever remember having new clothes, because I was the second son all my clothes were handed down from my older brother, as he grew out of them they were handed down to me, my younger always had new clothes as did my older brother, I can only assume that the hand downs were worn out by the time I finished with them. Shoes were always repaired it was very rare for anyone to buy new shoes. Our dad had a last which was stored in the shed and when our soles or heels wore out he would with help of the last resole and re-heel them. He always fitted steel toe-studs which I assume helped prevent wear. Socks also were not thrown out but darned, I can remember my dad kept a tobacco tin which he would slide into the sock to open it up and then darn the hole. Socks would have to be in a really bad state before they were replaced.

Every year we would have a holiday even though at the time couldn't afford to spend much. Consequently most of our holidays were spent camping. We would usually go to the Lake District or the Yorkshire Dales, these areas we came to know very well and had a great deal of fun. We also visited many towns and villages such as Harrogate where we would walk through and play in the Valley Gardens, wander around the town, drink the natural spring water and roam across the stray. A few miles from Harrogate was Knaresborough which is a beautiful small market town on the river Nidd with its own castle which is always worth a visit. The dungeons and torture chamber are still in excellent condition and give a good indication as to just how barbaric we were in those times. There is also a small market place which is great to wander round, who can resist market day at a small country market. It also the place where Mother Shipton the philosopher (although in her own time people her to be a witch) lived in a cave by the river next to the petrifying well. Once again this is a memory I will never forget, some years back I took Gary and Craig to the cave and well but alas it had turned into a tourist attraction, with concrete steps down and up, turnstiles and guides. Nothing like the way I remembered, steep muddy paths, slippery grass which it was often easier to slide down than walk. The cave entrance has been enlarged so it is no longer necessary to enter on hands and knees. It no longer gives any indication of how Mother Shipton lived (I suppose it is called progress or just a means of making money).

The river at Knaresborough is a very pleasant place to walk on a nice day, it is so peaceful and tranquil one can wander and forget the day to day problems we all have. On the bank it is possible to hire punts, canoes and rowing boats, how I remember the fun we had on the river. We also visited many other places in Yorkshire such as York with its beautiful museums,

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cathedral and town wall. The quaint streets known as the shambles is a real spectacle and to my knowledge has not changed to this day. The castle museum impressed me the most, the cobbled street with period shops and the products sold back then plus of course the carriages from many periods in history down the centre of the street. We did of course visit many other places such as Skipton, Pately Bridge, Stump Cross caverns to see the stalactites and stalagmites. We also spent time at the strid which is where the water flows fast through rocks that are close together, it is said that through the ages many have tried to jump the gap when the water is at its worst but few have made it. We also always went to Leeds which is where my grandmother lived, we also had other relatives in and around Leeds. I think I will mention here about a trip we made to Leeds when we heard that our grandmother was in hospital, she had fallen down the stairs and fractured her hip, she was 98 years old at the time. My dad got a call to say what had happened and decided to travel to Leeds to see his mum. However my mother also decided to go, this meant us lads would also have to go as there was no-one we could stay with in Great Yarmouth. We were quite young at the time so my memory is a little vague, however I do remember the journey. It was a nightmare.

We had quite a good car in those days, it was a Citroën light fifteen, front wheel drive which was rare back then (most cars were rear wheel drive). It was the middle of winter and the snow was thick on the ground. I know today people complain about the state of the roads after heavy snowfalls. I can only say they should have been around back then. Also it should be remembered that the cars back then were not as good as the ones you drive today, they had no screen washers and the heater was just a duct through from the engine compartment, so we tended to get leaves and other rubbish blowing into the car. Plus in cold weather the heat blown into the car was very little. I don't remember what time we left Yarmouth but it was quite late in the evening and of course dark. I do remember that the windscreen kept getting covered in slush and dirt and that every few miles my dad had to pull over, get out and clean the windscreen. We kids were on the back seat, huddled under a blanket trying to keep warm. I also remember that after travelling for some time we pulled into a pub car park and went in the pub where there was a roaring log fire which we sat around as close as we could get (it was heaven) we soon warmed up before travelling on. We arrived at my uncle house somewhere around midnight, we were all absolutely frozen, it had been a long cold trip and we were glad that it was over. Next morning we went to see our grandmother in hospital. The journey back we did in daylight and it was quite uneventful.

We visited so many places in Yorkshire I would writing for ever if I attempted to mention them all, however I will just mention the fun we had driving over the Pennines, back then all the fields had gates across the road to stop sheep roaming and someone had to get out of the car to open and close the gates for the car to go through. You cannot imagine the way us lads would argue about whose turn it was to open the gates. I doubt we would do so now. The car we had was a ford 8 and the number of times we had to get out and push on the steeper slopes

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I really could not count.

As I said earlier the other part of the country that we visited many times was the Lake District. When people ask me to describe the Lake District, I find it very difficult as the only way to appreciate the Lake District is to go there for a visit. Given the right weather conditions it can be unbelievably beautiful, it can also be intimidating under adverse weather conditions but it still has a certain feel that can not be found in many places around the world. Unfortunately there is now a motorway going right through the middle which has taken away some of its charm and imposing nature, because of the changes many people will not understand why I feel as I do about this part of Britain, but mine are childhood memories of the way it was in the past, which is why I fell in love with this place and also Yorkshire which I remember so well as a child. We would when possible spend a week in Yorkshire and a week in the Lake District. These were holidays that will never be forgotten as although I have travelled to many places through the years, these two places are special to me and probably always will be. I should mention at this point there were no motorways or town / village bypasses so a trip to Yorkshire or the Lake District was a full day's drive. Although the building of motorways and bypasses have made driving easier and journey's much quicker, I do feel that some of the interest and pleasure has also gone. Like Yorkshire most of our trips to the Lake District were camping holidays which I feel in many ways made them more exciting for children of our age than perhaps if we had stayed in guest houses etc. Usually we would camp at Grasmere or Ambleside, both of which were ideal settings for a camping holiday. Who could ask for a more pleasant, peaceful village than Grasmere with its old world charm and the picturesque river running through the centre. Its quaint shops and cafes and let's not forget one of the main reasons for Grasmere's fame. Dove cottage which was the home of William Wordsworth. Grasmere is also well known for its gingerbread, it is impossible to buy gingerbread like it anywhere else. As for Ambleside with its pier and lakeside walk overlooking Lake Windermere, the small town atmosphere and of course its central location within the heart of the Lake District. Apart from being a very Lakeland town, one attraction one never forgets is the bridge house. This naturally as expected is built on the bridge alongside the main street through the town. It must be one of the most photographed buildings in the town. Both Grasmere and Ambleside are in the heart of the Lake District, being almost central between Kendal and Keswick which are also very old Lakeland towns and well worth visiting. Turf Fen I also remember as it was the first time I had the chance to watch the sheep being sheared, the speed at which the shearer worked was amazing. It was also the first time I had the opportunity to watch a sheep dog at work, in about 15 minutes it had rounded up the whole herd and moved them through the field and out the gate. I have sheep dog trials on TV in recent years but they are not the same as watching a working dog in the fields. I don't think there is anywhere in England where you can capture so much old world charm in such a small area as the Lake District and of course the scenery on a fine day is breathtaking.

To walk through the mountain regions and spend time in the villages and towns, take boat trips around the lakes of Windermere, Coniston Water, Ullswater and the many other lakes within the

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area on a fine day is unbelievable. It does seem a little strange to be able to walk through the mountains and not meet another human, this kind of privacy is rare in our everyday lives. Also we should not forget Donald Cambell who died on Coniston Water whilst trying to beat his own water speed world record and to whom a memorial was erected and can still be seen today. I have always admired Donald Cambell and his achievements, I suppose it could be said that as I was growing up he was my hero.

In 1992 my older son Gary suggested we spend a few weeks in the United States and tour the Mid " West which I agreed was a great idea, something I would probably not have thought of doing by myself. I will not write about the trip as that is to come later but as we travelled back to Salt Lake we stopped overnight at a small town called Wendover. In the morning we carried on to Salt Lake. We had not travelled far when we saw a sign to the left for Bonneville Salt Flats, well that was it. I would go no further until we had been and seen the salt flats. Even though we were a little short on time, Gary gave in and we drove to the raceway. When we arrived, for me it was a dream come true. At the side of the track was a large board dedicated to Donald Cambell. The board showed the raceway and a history of the land speed records achieved by Donald Cambell. An added bonus was that they were holding world speed record attempts that day. People often talk about the luck of the Irish but that day was certainly our lucky day. We were approached by an American while we were reading the board, he asked if we were there to watch the record attempts. We explained that we had come across the raceway whilst travelling to Salt Lake, our holiday was over and we were returning to the UK the next day plus we also explained that we were very low on cash and could not pay the entrance fee. I am now rambling a bit, just bear with me, I will get to the point. He said that would be fine, it would be a shame to have travelled the distance that we had and not see the speed trials, so invited us to stay as guests which we were delighted to do. It was a really great day and for me as I have said a dream come true. I will continue now from where I deviated, I just felt this was the right place for this paragraph.

The Lake District is very difficult to describe, it really has to be seen and preferably under the right weather condition to appreciate it's true beauty. As I progress I will probably write about some of these places again as I have in later years returned to many. It was about this time that I should have been leaving school but I decided if possible I would like to take an apprenticeship, preferably in the engineering field, although at this time I was not sure which trade I wanted to go into. It was not possible to start an apprenticeship until I was sixteen (we left school at 15yrs old back then). With the support of my parents it was decided I would spend a year at the local college to improve my education (which was something I needed to do as I was never the keenest of scholars). At the same time I could obtain more information about the various trades and formulate some idea of the type of apprenticeship I would like to go in for. That summer I took a job in a local factory to earn some money so that I could help my parents with the purchase of books etc. that we knew I would need for college. This year I had decided

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to do my very best to achieve the results at college that I was sure I would need if I was to get a good apprenticeship next year. I did finally for the first time in my life study hard and get the results I needed. I never forgot the help my parents gave so that I could achieve the results I got. I had the qualifications I needed to try and get a good apprenticeship but still did not know which trade I wanted to go into as I was interested in all aspects within the engineering field. I applied for an apprenticeship with a local company and was successful in getting an apprenticeship as a boilermaker. I worked for this company for about six months, when my father asked why they had not issued the apprenticeship papers which would have made my apprenticeship legally binding, they used the excuse that it was not necessary until the completion of the apprenticeship, this was illegal and was as things turned out in my favour. I had been offered an apprenticeship with the Central Electricity Generating Board as an electrical fitter. It was the beginning of a lifelong change and stood me in good stead for the rest of my working life. Whilst training and working for the power industry I met my first girlfriend who really was a super person to be with and we had many great times together.

It was at this time I started riding motorcycles, I also got engaged to this girl (Pamela although she preferred to be called Pam). We really thought we were made for each other at the time, life just could not get any better. It was during this period of my life that I first visited Scotland. My parents had rented a caravan at Fort William for two weeks and they invited Pam to join us on this holiday, which was a great idea, well I thought so. I knew we would have a great time, a whole two weeks together. Since we could not all travel in my dad's car, it was decided that I would take the bike with Bryan my older brother riding pillion. The rest would travel in the car. We visited many places in Scotland such as Stirling, Isle of Skye, Ben Nevis and many more places in the Highlands. Unfortunately the weather was not in our favour for most of our stay which is perhaps one of the reasons I have no wish to return to Scotland for future holidays. It was shortly after this holiday that Pam joined the Mormons, she had always been religious but this was a step too far. However I did attend a number of meetings but soon realised it was not for me and by mutual agreement we decided to end the engagement and go our separate ways.

Shortly after this I took up ballroom dancing lessons at a local dancing school which apart from the lessons also had a social side. This is where I was to meet my future wife although at the time I had no idea that this would happen. The dancing that I learnt at the school was to prove a great asset in years to come. I cannot remember the exact year but it was sometime in the mid-1960s that an American fighter jet crashed into the river bank at Gorleston-on-sea which is just south of Great Yarmouth. At the time I was at work in the power station and can remember the noise as it came in low over the power station before crashing into the river bank, fortunately no one was hurt. The pilot had taken the plane out to sea, set it on auto-pilot and then ejected. For some unknown reason the plane turned a full 180 degrees and came back towards the shore losing height all the time, that is until it crashed.

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At this time I was about nineteen and well into motorcycling, most weekends touring, attending race meetings or doing the necessary repairs which seemed to be an ongoing exercise for motorcycles of that era. This is not to say we didn't have fun riding the machines we had at the time but you soon learnt to repair them as well. During this period I with my brothers or friends travelled to many places around the country. Once again back to the Lake District and Yorkshire which I have already said I love to visit. It was much more fun to return on the motorcycles, the country is made for it. One summer my brothers and I toured around Darbyshire and I was amazed at the scenery we encountered. It was the first time I had visited that part of the country and could not believe how beautiful it was. Although I enjoyed travelling to different parts of the country, I would not like to give the impression that Norfolk and Suffolk do not have areas of outstanding beauty also. There are so many places around the coast that I have always enjoyed visiting even though most of them are only a short ride away from Great Yarmouth. Some of them I will try to describe before going any further. First we will take a tour of a few places north of Great Yarmouth and in fact still do. There are some very old world villages north of Great Yarmouth and they all have their own individual character and in many cases buildings. There are also some great beaches in and between the villages, one village that I often visited was Sea Palling, I can give no reason for this except that it was a very pleasant and relaxing place to spend an afternoon or a day out. I would wander for hours along the beach and around the village and enjoy the surroundings and view from the beach. Happisburg is another place I remember well, with its Lighthouse and quaint houses. I also remember Horsey Staithe very well with its renovated wind-pump and great picnic area plus the walks around the broad and of course the staithe itself. As we go slightly further north we come to Cley Bird Sanctuary which I remember well from my schooldays where I spent many summer days in the school holidays roaming and bird watching and last but not least we come to Cromer which is famous for its crabs also its high cliffs and pier plus the very narrow streets and the lifeboat station which has a long history and is very well known.

One place I have not yet mentioned is Brancaster where we once went on holiday with our parents. That trip will never be forgotten as on the way there we had about sixteen punctures all of which had to be repaired at the roadside. It must have been the shortest journey we ever made and taken the longest time that I can remember. I will say that once we arrived it proved to be one of the best holidays we had enjoyed up till then. There were other places that I enjoyed in Norfolk which were further inland and among these were Cockly Cley which is a replica of an Iceni village and also Walsingham the village where time seems to stand still. It is also the place where the church to our Lady of Walsingham is situated, also where people from all over the country come on an annual pilgrimage, I believe it takes place at Easter but am not too sure. Another place I feel I should mention is Burgh Castle which is an old Roman Castle situated just outside of Great Yarmouth. Many happy days were spent there as a child, it is a cycle ride from the town which probably was the attraction as in the school holidays we were always looking for somewhere to go where we could have fun. The castle was built with its rear towards the river which meant the Romans only had to build three walls, they used the river as the fourth barrier. Any attack from the river would be seen and easily defended.

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One area I have not really mentioned yet is my own home town of Great Yarmouth, most of us tend to speak of the places we visit but rarely talk about or show much interest in our own towns. The town is situated on the east coast of Norfolk, it is a major holiday resort and has one of the best beaches in the country. The marine parade on the one side is lined with various restaurants, amusement arcades, public houses and the usual hot-dog stalls plus hamburger stalls there also the usual souvenir shops that one associated with any seaside town. The beach side has other attractions, ornamental gardens, bowling greens, tennis courts, fun fairs and boating lake plus a few other holiday attractions. Most of the old town has disappeared but if you take the time there are still historical places to be seen. The market place still exists although it has been modified over the years. Quite close to the market place is the Dissenters Cemetery and on Blackfriars Road the old town wall is well worth seeing. On the Marine Parade between the Britannia Pier and the Wellington Pier is the Jetty which is where Lord Nelson landed after the battle of the Nile. In the market place is the Wrestlers Inn which is where stayed whilst in Great Yarmouth, at the south end of the marine parade is Nelsons Monument. Many people ask why is Norfolk named Nelson County it is because Nelson was born in North Norfolk in a small village called Burnham Thorpe. There are other places to visit such as museums and of course there river walks along the Yare and Breydon Water which is the start of the Norfolk Broads.

Along the Gorleston side of the river there is the old lookout tower and the lifeboat station. There are the usual tourist shops and stalls plus an excellent theatre, also the cliffs are very popular with walkers and a great place for an afternoon stroll. About three miles off the coast at Great Yarmouth is Scroby Sands which is home to one of the largest seal populations around the British Coast. Many people take a boat trip to see the seals as there are few places they can be seen in such large numbers. Going south from Great Yarmouth we come to Lowestoft which is the most easterly point in England and as we drive out from Lowestoft we find some of the most picturesque scenery around this part of the coast. One place that has always been special for me is Covehithe, a very small and not very well known village. Further along is Walberswick Common and Dunwich, both are enjoyable places to visit and if the weather is right no better places can be found for an enjoyable day out. Today Dunwich is a small village, many years back it was a very important town and has a very interesting history. There are many lovely spots around this area of Suffolk which I have visited but I write only of those that hold special memories for me. Framlingham Castle is without doubt my favourite place in this area of Suffolk, situated on the edge of Framlingham Village which is also picturesque the grounds are an ideal for picnics, nice cut grounds where children can play. It has everything for a nice family day out. Walking through the grounds and crossing the moat, it quickly becomes clear that the castle has been well preserved. Walking round the castle is a really worth while experience, the chimneys in particular are well worth the visit, they are ornamental and each is a different shape. This is a place I have returned to many times over the years.

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It was about this time that I decided to travel overseas for a holiday, it would be the first time I had been out of England. Although I did not know at the time it would be the first of many overseas trips. I spoke to a friend who also wanted to go overseas on holiday and we decided to tour part of Europe on my motor-bike which was a BSA road rocket 650cc machine. So the planning began, we decided to travel by boat from Great Yarmouth to Rotterdam, tour through Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France then back along the coast to Rotterdam. The boat we sailed on was the Superior Trader, a cargo vessel which carried fruit and vegetablesâ€™ between Great Yarmouth and Rotterdam. Unfortunately due to bad weather conditions in the North Sea our arrival in Rotterdam was very late. We were unable to clear the motor-bike through customs until the following morning. We were however able to leave the boat so decided to spend the evening in town, have a meal and then look around (just to kill time really). As we were leaving the dockyard a young Dutchman came over to speak to us, asking if we had just arrived as he had seen the ship dock. We explained the position we were in and he offered to show us round town that evening, an offer we were glad to accept. He drove us to his apartment where we had a drink and chat whilst he showered and changed, and then we all went on a tour of Rotterdam by night. It was a great night out. also our first introduction to the people of Holland who proved to be equally as friendly and good natured as the young man we had met as we came out of the dockyard that first night. From Rotterdam we travelled through Holland to Brussels in Belgium where we stayed for a day or two site-seeing. Brussels is a very clean city with many things to do and great number of parks and building to visit. However the building I remember (when I say building I am using the word loosely) was the Atomium, it had been built the previous year to celebrate the World Trade Fair which had been held there. Leaving Brussels we travelled through Belgium towards Luxembourg, passing many picturesque towns and villages. One village I remember very well is Metz , known as the village of children, situated on the border between Belgium and Luxembourg. Apart from being an attractive village, in the village square is an aircraft standing nose down in the grass (not the kind of thing you expect to see in a village square). From Luxembourg we carried on through northern France via Soissons and Lille towards Calais. I am not going to mention the other places we passed through as there were so many. I will say however that we met friendly and helpful people where ever we went.

The scenery was well worth looking at and we stopped many times on our route through that part of Europe. We spent about four days in Calais as we realised our trip had taken longer than expected and we would not reach Rotterdam in time for the return trip to Great Yarmouth. As things turned out we had a very enjoyable stay in Calais and were surprised at how much there was to see and do. We sailed back on the CalaisDover Ferry and rode home from there stopping at Southend overnight on the way back. This was the first time that I had travelled overseas and we had seen and done so much in the time available that I knew it would be the first trip of many if the opportunity arose. At this time I was still working as an apprentice with the Generating Board so money was a bit tight, even so I was determined to save enough to travel

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overseas the following year. The only decision I had to make was how much could I save and where would I go. However this would give me something to think about over the winter months. At this time I was still interested in ballroom dancing and most Fridays I would take dancing lessons, Saturdays was a time to meet other people as it was an open night for all members to meet and dance with the partners they wished to. I was still very interested in motorcycles and would spend time in the winter checking the bike and doing any repairs that were necessary. Not only my bike but those belonging to my brothers as well. I would also find the time to go out and take photographs of winter scenes as photography had been a hobby of mine since I was quite young.

During my teenage years monochrome processing was relatively inexpensive and I would spend many evening in the winter months developing and printing my own films. I would then select the best and enlarge them changing the format as I went along to obtain the most pleasing results. My father first interested me in photography when I was quite young. I can still remember the first film I developed as though it was yesterday. At the time we had no enlargement equipment, so had to expose the negatives to sunlight in a split frame and continually check to get the right exposure. When I was happy with the exposure I would then fix the print. The print was of course Sepia and the print was a contact print which was the reason for using 120 film. Over the next few years I was to meet many good photographers and with their assistance would learn a great deal about photography that I could not have learnt on my own. I became so interested that over a period of time I built a reasonably good studio setup and also at this time a darkroom that was more than adequate for the work I was doing. Much of the studio equipment I did have to make myself but it was good enough for my requirements. Over the years I collected a large amount of prints, slides, cine film and video which at some time I would like to be able to sort out and organise in some order and also enhance in some way. Unfortunately I never seem to find the time and of course the longer I leave it the harder it becomes.

We are now well into winter and I have finally decided my destination for my holiday next summer. Since I will be travelling alone, I have decided on a coach trip through the middle of Spain and then a ferry across to Tangier™s in Morocco. We drove from England via the cross channel ferry from Dover, through France and the middle of Spain. The trip was not without incident as the coach broke down near San Sebastian in Spain and we had to stay the night. My first thought was, what a waste of valuable time but I was wrong. We stayed at a hotel which had a Greek nightclub in the basement, we had quite a party and finished the evening off drinking champagne cocktails and dancing Zorba™s dance to traditional Greek music. The following day we continued on our way across Spain. The villages and towns in central Spain are very different to the tourist resorts around the coast, it is like travelling in a different country. Many parts of Central Spain are arid with dirt roads through the small villages and towns and you get the feeling that has passed them by. It was an experience I would not have missed, you got the feeling that it was the real Spain and not something artificially designed solely to attract foreign tourists. We finally arrived at the port in Algerceras and boarded a ferry for Tangiers, on

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arrival in Tangiers we were taken to the Hotel Chellah, booked in and then went sight-seeing. Having never been to an arab country before there was much to see and do, at first it was quite bewildering. The Medina in the old town was a most intriguing place to walk through and of course if like me it can take some time, particularly if one is looking and bartering for souvenirs etc .as you walk along. The music from the mosqueâ€™s, the dust and constant noise all add to the excitement of being there. Some of the Arab customs I found appalling, like the incident I witnessed one morning as I was walking through the town. This Arab was riding a donkey whilst his woman walked beside him laden with goods on her back. He had a rope round her neck and if she faltered he beat her with a stick and pulled on her neck with the rope, until she caught up with him. The large number of beggars also tended to take away some of the charm, although I know that to these people begging is a way of life and that a lot of children are deliberately crippled at an early age by their parent, I still cannot understand the mentality of these people who can mutilate their own children as a means of earning money. The way servants were treated I also found distasteful, the Arabâ€™s looking for work would sit along a wall in the Medina and the wealthy would walk round and look to decide who to select as a servant. This would be accomplished with much hair pulling, kicking and looking into the mouths of the hopeful servants which were generally forced open with a stick. I guess it could be said that servants were definitely worth much less to these people than an animal. Apart from my dislike of the above I did have a good holiday there and would certainly go again

The beach was one of the best I have ever seen and although it was hot there always seemed to be a pleasant breeze. The sea was deep blue and of course being warm was quite pleasant to swim in. Changing your clothes on the beach is not allowed in Tangier, so they had beach clubs along the edge of the beach which as a tourist you could join for a nominal fee. The clubs were great as they all featured lounge areas, swimming pools and poolside bars. It was at a beach club that I first met an Arab girl whose name was Zenob and although we had a lot of fun at the club and on the beach, I never could get over the Arab custom of a single woman having to wear a Yashmac to walk down to the beach club. Once in the club she would remove all her arab robes and wear the tiniest bikini you are likely to see. There were also a number of nightclubs in the town, one of which we went to. The entrance fee for the club, allowed the ticket holder one free drink and we were advised by the holiday rep. to order a long drink and make it last as the drinks in the club were very expensive. This particular club were renowned for its Belly Dancers. The show was really excellent and well worth paying to see. Itâ€™s quite amazing what these girls can do with their stomachs and hips. Another bar I used regularly in the evenings was Trudyâ€™s Bar and it was there I met an Irish girl who was also on holiday. We became quite good friends, in the evening she would get on stage and sing. She had a very pleasant voice and was well liked by the customers. Although she sang for pleasure any drinks that we had were free which was quite a saving as drinks in Tangier were expensive. Unfortunately we never kept in touch and I do wonder at times what she is doing now and how she is getting on. Back then she worked for Air Lingus . I also remember visiting a town called Tetuan whilst there and was lucky enough to arrive in the middle of a religious festival. The atmosphere was great with much singing and dancing in the streets. There were street vendors

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selling all kinds of souvenirs and food stuff. It was on the way to Tetuan that I experienced my first sandstorm. The sand was blown high in the sky and totally obliterated all daylight and was driven by the wind at such a pace we had to find some form of shelter. We were driving past a long wall in the desert behind which we took shelter. When I asked why it had been built out there in the desert with no village or town nearby I was told it was a burial ground. The arabs build a wall and bury their dead within the wall. I really do not know if what I was told is true. Last of all what is the ambition of every tourist in an arab country, to ride a camel of course. Well I managed that also and enjoyed the experience, it was quite a bumpy ride and I am not sure if itâ€™s an experience I would want to repeat.

Generally speaking it was a great holiday and for me different, I still wish I could have stayed longer. By this time I had completed my apprenticeship with the Generating Board and was working for them as an electrical fitter. I am a little confused about the times and chain of events in my life at stage, therefore although the events are accurate there may be discrepancies with the dates. At this time I was still very much into motorbikes, in fact I still am to this day. I was still going to dancing lessons which is how I met the young lady I would eventually marry. I can remember walking into the ballroom one night and noticed a girl on the dance floor. I immediately thought "WOW" sheâ€™s nice, I was a little hesitant but did pluck up the courage to ask her for a dance. When I asked her for a dance and she yes not only once but twice, my night was made, I felt like I was walking on air. I did not see much of her for the rest of the night until it was time to go home. She asked for a lift home, I really did not see why I should take her home since I had arranged to drop a friend off on my way home. Remember I was riding a motorbike and three would be a crowd. I suggested she ask the guy she had spent most of the night with. The following Friday night I went to the school for a group lesson and we were asked by the dance teacher to pair up for the evening, which of course we did, which meant we spent most of the evening together. During the evening she asked why I had refused to give her a lift home on the previous Friday. I explained that I was in the company of friends and could see no reason to leave as she had totally ignored me for the latter part of the evening. She said that at the time she was made to look very foolish and was quite angry. By the time she got home she could see the funny side, as no one had ever refused to give her a lift home in the past. This time I did take her home and also arranged a date for the following day.

I picked her up from her home in Caister and suggested a day out around the villages and part of the Broads and then return home via Reedham Ferry. The whole day was a disaster and yet fun. When I arrived to pick her up, she explained that an appointment had been made at the chiropodist which she had forgotten and asked if we could go there first. After leaving the chiropodist we went for a Knickerbocker Glory in a local cafÃ©. We then rode out into the Broadlands, through local villages and then crossed the river at Reedham Ferry, which is a very pleasant spot on the Norfolk Broads and very popular in the summer months. It had been a

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good day even though it did not start as we intended it should. Having crossed the ferry we stopped at the pub for a drink and a chance to relax and chat, when we left the pub to go home "Disaster" the rear wheel on the bike had a puncture. I phoned my father who said he would come out in the van, we could then remove the wheel and take it for repair. This was ok by me but Janet had to get home, we asked a number of people in the pub if they were going to Caister and fortunately there was a couple going to Great Yarmouth and they agreed to take Janet home. The next morning when the man was leaving for work he found a handbag in the car, checked inside and found it belonged to Janet who he and his wife had taken home the previous night. Fortunately there was an address and phone number in the bag, so he contacted Jan and said he would take the bag round to their house on his way home that evening. Unknown to me she already had a boyfriend who happened to be at the house when the man returned her handbag. I was told later that she had quite a difficult time explaining how her bag came to be left in the man's car. I never did get a full account of the explanation given but would imagine it was quite interesting. It was at this time we started going out together and dancing together at the dancing school. The year would be about 1966, the same year that England won the World Cup.

We went round local beauty spots and also had holidays in Yorkshire and the Lake District, areas I have already written of. That winter we booked a summer holiday in Spain at Tossa del Mar. In between booking the holiday and actually going we decided to get engaged if our parents approved which they did of course. We had an engagement party at the Garibaldi Hotel which at that time held dinner dances every Saturday night. It was not a large affair as we only invited our families and close friends but a good time was had by all.

We flew to Perpignan on the French Spanish border and went the rest of the way to Tossa Del Mar by coach. It was a very relaxing holiday mainly walking along the beach and swimming in the sea which was deep blue and crystal clear. Midday we would find a beach café and sit in the shade whilst having lunch and a long cool drink. Whilst there we took the local train to various resorts along the coast, at this time Spain had not been spoilt in the effort to attract foreign tourists. The towns and villages were completely natural. We also went on a number of excursions through the tour company, one of which was a Mock Bull Fight at San Cipriano. It was a real fun day out, people spraying and drinking champagne and of course those who had a few too many, who imagined they were Bull Fighters, were very keen to jump into the Bull Ring and take on the young Bulls. There was no real danger as the Spaniards running the show kept an eye on the would be Matadors. We also booked a table at a Flamenco Club as we were told it was worth watching and also a good night out. We had an excellent meal and then settled down to watch the show, the costumes were brilliant and the dancers were playing castanets while dancing. It was a really enjoyable evening, an evening we were glad we had not missed.

We booked a trip to Barcelona and although it was a very tiring day, was well worth it. We went

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round the Cathedral and walked through the Cathedral Grounds where they still keep geese to warn of intruders. At the back of the Cathedral we found a small candle shop where they made the most beautiful candles we had ever seen. We bought one and brought it back to England with us. We also walked along the Waterfront, The ships and activity was fascinating and we also wandered around the Waterfront shops. We were walking through the city when we spotted a church, it was a lovely building spires and ornamental stonework. It was called the church of the Holy Family and was being financed by public donations. The church has been under construction since 1882, which is a very long time and it had still not been completed. Tossa Del Mar was a typically Spanish Town with its narrow streets, town square and small market. At one end of the town was an old Spanish Fortress which was a nice place to walk since it was shady and cool under the trees, a nice change from walking on hot sand. We also spent some time in the local museum and learnt something about the history of the town.

The year is now 1968 and we have decided to get married, we have the approval of our parents and have been to see the Vicar at Saint Nicholas Parish Church. The church is situated in the centre of town at the north end of the market. To get married in a particular church you must be a resident of that parish. To get round the problem we gave the address of a lady Jan was friendly with. We agreed on a date for the wedding which would be the 21st September in the afternoon. Over the next few months we had great fun organising the guest list, ordering flowers and carnations, arranging the caterers and booking the room for the reception, we chose Mathes in King Street. We also went house hunting and finally settled on a two bedroom bungalow in Bradwell which is a suburb of Great Yarmouth. We also went to Norwich to arrange for Jan's wedding dress and the bridesmaid dresses as these would be made to measure. Then last but not least we went through holiday brochures to book our honeymoon. All the planning went well and the big day finally arrived, we were all nervous but excited at the same time. Early morning I drove out and collected the flowers and carnations, others were checking catering arrangements and cars plus other details that might have been overlooked. After which it was time to get dressed for the wedding. The Wedding was a great success and all went as planned, the church bells rang, the choir sang and the organ played. The atmosphere was romantic and yet at the same time exciting, it made all the preparation worthwhile.

The wedding breakfast was in the afternoon, which consisted of a sit down meal, toasts, reading of telegrams and reading of greeting cards then much dancing. Since many of the people we invited were working during the day we had a buffet and live group in the evening. Even today so many years later I still feel I was very lucky to have met and married Jan, the most gorgeous and radiant bride ever. We had decided to stay in our own home on our wedding night and leave a day later for our honeymoon. We had booked ten days at a small Spanish fishing village called Canet which was approximately ten miles from Callela, a large resort and very popular with tour companies. We stayed at a small Pension, we thought at first we had made a mistake but were wrong. The village was natural and unspoilt also very picturesque with a small harbour

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and fishing boats plus the usual caf s and bars and of course the village square. Some of the places we went to have been mentioned earlier so I will skip over them. On this trip we had the opportunity to go horse riding in the mountains and stop for a barbecue in the evening before returning to the village. The whole evening was fun although I think if the horses had been blindfolded they would have still found their way there and back. We also took the local train to Callela and spent the day around the town and on the beach. It made a change from our village, we also bought souvenirs to take back for relatives and friends.

In Canet we spent most of our time on the beach or wandering through the groynes looking at all kinds of sea insects and small fish. Most lunchtimes we would sit and eat at the local caf  in the village square and just watch life go by. There was very little night life in the village so we would go to bed quite early. One night at about 22.00hrs. we heard music and singing from a club or a bar not far from the pension, since it appeared to come from close by we decided to try and find it. We walked round the village and came across a small local bar. When we entered we found it was used by local people who were singing and having a great time. The first evening we spent talking to an Englishman who was running a local business and used the bar frequently. It was quite a good evening but the local s were not keen to mix. We enjoyed the atmosphere and since there was nowhere else to go at night it became a regular place to spend the evenings. After a couple of nights the locals began to talk to us, so the evenings got even better. By the time we left Canet we had got to know the locals quite well and were in some ways sad to leave. It was a great honeymoon but it was now time to return to the real world.

We arrived home and began to settle into our own home for the first time since we were married. It was more like a second honeymoon, we had looked forward to having our own house for so long, it was a dream come true to actually move in. After we moved in there were a number of improvements we wanted to make so money was a little tight. There is something about your first home as a married couple, I think however much you move the first home is always remembered. It was about this time I decided to change my job, I applied for a position of maintenance electrician at a local food processing factory which I was successful in, and so I left the Generating Board to start work in the factory. Once again I was very lucky as the job I had taken on was interesting and while there would learn a great deal which would benefit me in the future. The year after we were married we could not afford a holiday overseas so decided to book a holiday in UK. We decided to go to North Wales an area we had never been to. We stayed at Conway, a lovely little town on the Welsh Coast which had a small but picturesque harbour. There were many quaint shops in the town, it was possible to spend a whole day wandering in and out of the tiny shops which sold many unusual souvenirs and gifts. A number of the shops were what I called shell shops as they sold only gifts that were made from sea shells, the variety they sold was unbelievable. We also went to many places ie:- Caernarvon, Mount Snowden and Bedy Gelert of which there is a great story which I will try to remember. The scenery around North Wales is really lovely and I don t think my description will do it

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justice. Walking through country lanes, past babbling brooks, running streams and waterfalls with the sunlight streaming through the trees and silence but for the sound of the insects and birds. The peace and tranquillity is unbelievable, it was a different world to our daily lives.

The place we stayed was similar to a motel in design, small wooden chalets dotted around a grass area beneath the trees. There was a small restaurant and lounge where people could meet but as the chalets were self catering most people ate in. North Wales is a long way from Great Yarmouth and the route is cross country and at the time there were no motorways. I have just remembered the story about Bedy Gelert I think. A knight went away to fight in the Crusades and left his faithful hound Gelert with his wife so she would be safe from harm until his return. When he arrived home he was told that his wife had been killed by a wolf. The villagers had to bury her, he arrived at his home and being very sad but also angry that his hound Gelert who he had trusted to keep his wife safe until his return had let him down. When Gelert ran to meet him, pleased to see his master return, the knight being very angry drew his sword and killed the hound. Some time later the knight was wandering through the woods and found the body of a wolf, he knew then that he had made a terrible mistake. He took the body of Gelert and buried him by a waterfall nearby which is why the place is called Bedy Gelert, the true meaning is Bed of Gelert. It is said the knight never recovered from the death of his wife and the slaying of Gelert, which he was guilty of.

After our holiday in North Wales we started on the improvements we wanted to make to the house. Money was a little tight but then it usually is for most young couples, we had a coal fire in the lounge and a boiler in the kitchen for hot water. This seemed a waste so we decided to install a back boiler in the lounge and central heating throughout, it also meant we could enlarge the kitchen by removing the Boiler and chimney breast. With the help of a plumber and bricklayer that was what we did. We also had the gardens to sort out, when we moved in they were rough ground and needed to be levelled and lawns laid etc.. We also wanted to concrete the driveway and garage base then have a garage erected. By winter most of the work was complete. During the winter we decided we wanted to go overseas for a holiday in the summer but wanted something different to the usual tourist locations. We finally chose Yugoslavia, back in 1970 it was a country not yet involved in tourism, although I believe it became a popular tourist area in later years.

We stayed in a small fishing village near Senji on the Adriatic Coast. The village was built around a tiny harbour and all the village activity centred round the harbour. Both sides of the harbour there were white sandy beaches, so there was plenty of space for walking or just lazing about and swimming. There were no beach stalls or bars along the beach so we would take our food and drink for the day or return to the village for lunch. There were times when we would go to the harbour at lunchtime, most days there would be a returned fishing boat grilling fresh fish on a charcoal grill. A chunk of fresh bread, freshly grilled fish and a carafe of cherry or apricot

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brandy, was a very enjoyable lunch. Whilst there we tried the local beer and wines but they were too dry for us, so we kept to the brandy. There were many small Islands around the coast and it was possible to hire sailing dinghies or canoes. On some days we would take a packed lunch and spend the day canoeing round the Islands, stopping on one for lunch and a swim. One day we took a boat trip around some of the larger Islands and were amazed at the number of nudist colonies on the Islands, in 1970 nudism was rare in UK.

Whilst we were there we found it was possible to book a day trip to Venice by Hydrofoil at a town just up the coast from where we were staying. Having made enquiries we booked a trip, having never been on a Hydrofoil it was quite an experience. The trip to Venice took about two hours, the water was a bit choppy which added to the fun and excitement. The feeling of power and speed as we sped over the sea was exhilarating and we were excited at the chance to see Venice. We had heard a lot about Venice and seen it on TV. , now we were to see it. It was a dream come true.

As we approached Venice we passed a large Island which seemed remote from Venice itself even though it was part of Venice. Once we had disembarked the day was our own. We were to begin with a little confused and had no idea where to start, there was so much to see and do. The buildings were like something from a Fairy Tale, where do we start were our thoughts. We were there actually standing in St. Marks Square, we went to the Doge's Palace and then in and out of some of the other buildings around the Square, all were unbelievably beautiful. We walked across the Rialto Bridge not once but many times (we were like kids in a toy shop). We walked for miles along canals and over bridges and wherever we went there were Gondolas plying up and down the canals. There were many other craft also which were constantly on the move supplying goods to the shops, cafes and restaurants etc. the whole town was a hive of activity. We visited the craft centres where we watched the glass blowers making vases and glasses being blown and shaped by hand, it was fascinating to watch. We also saw other craftsmen making jewellery and leather goods plus many other items in the various workshops. We finished the day by taking a Gondola trip down the Grand Canal. By this time it was getting late and time to embark on the Hydrofoil for the return trip to Yugoslavia, however Venice was all we had expected and a dream come true. We now have only a few days left, so it was into town and look for souvenirs and presents to take home. After which we spent the day relaxing on the beach. Saturday night the villagers would get together and spit roast a pig along the harbour. All were invited and there was a real carnival atmosphere, there was talking, eating, drinking and those in the mood to dance would dance the night away. We wanted a holiday with a difference and that was what we got.

It was about two months later that Jan came home from work and told me that she was

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pregnant, she did not have to ask of I was pleased, one look at my face was enough. The next few months were some of the happiest ever. There was so much we wanted to do before the baby arrived I really didn't think we would have the time. First we re-decorated the spare bedroom, had a carpet fitted and then began to turn the room into a nursery. There was so much that had to be bought, we decided to buy some each week and the more expensive stuff when we could afford it. Some months earlier we had bought a Cockatiel which Jan had named Georgie. He had the freedom of the house when we were at home and was a bundle of fun. He was very attached to Jan and if she was out would lead me a right dance. I am sure he knew when I was getting wound up as he would get worse. The names I called him at times are unprintable. We also had a kitten who Jan named Fred, her greatest pleasure seemed to be swinging from the curtains and leaping over the furniture. She soon gave trying to catch Georgie, he always won. I did say her, when we first got Fred we were told she was male. It was some time before we realised that Fred was female and really should have been called Freda, too late she would only answer to Fred. Georgie and Fred got on well together although Georgie would tease her rotten. One day Fred went out and never returned, some weeks went by and we then had to accept she had probably gone on a walk about, she had always been a roamer. Perhaps I should mention at this point that we have both always liked animals. When Jan was younger she had all the usual childhood pets, dogs, cats, rabbits and at one time a grass snake "œfunny girl". My brothers and I had dogs, cats, white mice and pigeons, nothing unusual.

We had made a fish pond in the back garden with a rockery around the back and sides and the front sloping down to the lawn. My parents had gone on holiday and left Kim their dog at home. I would stop by the house in the morning on my way to work and again in the evening on my way home to take Kim for walks and to feed her. It was a Saturday morning, I went round to exercise and feed Kim as usual, and then drove home. During the day I heard a Broadcast on the radio saying there was a flood alert in Great Yarmouth and that residents should expect the worst. I drove to my parents house and collected Kim and took her to our house, unfortunately Kim had a silly half hour. She had never been to our house, as she was charging round the garden she must have thought the pond was a puddle and jumped straight in. Oops! The fish survived but Kim we had to haul out by her collar. She never made that mistake again.

As the months passed by and the birth of our first child grew closer we became excited and yet apprehensive, it would be a big moment in our lives. The nursery was finished and we had all of the things we thought we would need. We kept waiting and waiting but after the baby became two weeks overdue, still no sign of the baby being born, Jan was taken into Hospital where they decided to induce her "œwhatever that means". The staff were very good and the baby was finally born, it was a very difficult birth and I stayed with Jan all evening, I then had to go home. Early next morning before I had a chance to phone the Hospital (in those times not many people had phones at home, we used phone boxes which stood on the corner of most streets) the police came to the house. They explained that Jan had given birth during the early hours of

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the morning and that we had a boy but unfortunately there had been complications and the baby was not expected to live. They then asked if we had a named the baby, they could not ask Jan as she was still sedated and didn't know how critical the baby was. I said yes one of the names we were thinking of for a boy was Gary, naturally I felt like I had been kicked in the teeth and was totally disorientated, almost in a daze. The date was 27th September 1971. Jan was told she could remain in the Hospital and care for Gary as he was now called. When I arrived at the Hospital Gary was in an incubator and would be so for some days. The next ten days were a worrying time for us both, I would go to see them every lunchtime and also every evening. Every day we could see an improvement and after ten days the Hospital decided Gary could come home. It was such a happy and emotional time I need mention it no further.

The next few weeks were quite hectic as like any young couple you think that you can cope. Unfortunately very few things go to plan particularly where children are concerned. The next few months passed very quickly, we had gone through the winter and it was now summer. The summer of 1971 was one of the best ever, the sun seemed to shine every day. Jan and Gary would be out almost every day, walking the country lanes or walking into town, Gary in the pram, Jan doing the walking. At weekends we would on a Sunday find somewhere to go, there are so many broads and beaches in the area where we live. One of the places we visited quite often was the Kessingland Wildlife Park which is just through Lowestoft. The park was an ideal place to spend a day out, there were so many animals and birds, plus there were also country walks through the estate. In the centre there was a picnic area, cafe and souvenir shop. We had a great summer but all too soon it was over. Unfortunately nothing in life remains the same and the Winds of Change had already started, although at the time they went unnoticed. A month before Gary was born, Jan had to stop work we then had to live on my wage which was not that good - Jan had quite a good job as she was the area window dressing supervisor for the Paige Group in East Anglia. The area she covered included Ipswich, Norwich, Lowestoft, Great Yarmouth and Beccles, very busy young lady. The only way we could manage was by me taking on extra work.

It was at this time that Politics were about to play a part in the path we would take and the cause of the way our life would be in the future. In 1972 we realised if conditions did not improve by the end of the year we would have spent our savings and also would probably have to sell our home. Something had to be done if we were not to lose all that we had worked for. We came up with various ideas but it became clear that we had to move overseas and start again or I would have to find work at a much higher rate of pay. At this time the oil and gas industry was beginning to take off, this appeared to be the only better paid work in this area at the time. We were a young family so decided if possible I would avoid offshore work. Over the next few months it appeared that the offshore industry was the only option. We checked newspaper adverts both national and local and finally found an alternative, reading through one of the national papers we came across an advert for the South African Navy for staff to work in the Naval Dockyard in Simonstown. This job offered assisted passage and rented accommodation until such time we would be in a position to rent or buy our own property. I

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applied for the position and was sent an application form after some weeks had passed. In the meantime we came across an advert for electricians needed by a power company in Zambia. The company in Zambia were offering free passage, company housing, private schooling, private health care and part payment of wages in UK a much better deal. Also it was a three year contract, renewable so we had no need to burn our bridges. It had to be better than emigrating, which would have meant selling up.

We can once again start looking to the future, at the moment we are keeping our options open and trying to handle both applications, although the job in Zambia is the one we hope to get. Some time passed before we heard from the company in Zambia, when we did it was good news. They wanted me to attend an interview in London, it was now decision time keeping our options open was getting difficult. We decided to reject the job in South Africa and concentrate on the Zambian one.

The interview in London was the first of many, in the following weeks there were a number of interviews to attend. After the first interview Jan and I would both travel to London, I would discuss the work and Jan would be told about life living in Zambia and given the chance to ask questions. When we returned home after the interviews Jan would have a pile of Zambian newspapers to read so we both understood the way of life in Zambia. Finally before I could be accepted I had to have a medical in Harley Street. The company went to extreme lengths to ensure that I would be happy with the working conditions and that Jan would be comfortable with the lifestyle. It was after all costing them a lot of money and they wanted their staff to stay. Finally all the interviews were over and all we needed was a work permit for me. In all it took six months from the first interview to getting a departure date.

The next few months were a busy time, we had odd jobs to complete and needed to list what we would need to pack. Packing cases had to be made, shipping agents contacted and estate agents to see as we had decided to let the bungalow rather than sell. Our personal belongings which were going by sea had to leave three months in advance, if they were to be there when we arrived. It was quite difficult deciding what we could live without for three months, but by begging and borrowing from relatives and friends we got by. We finally received the departure date for the 11th November 1972. Time to pack the packing cases and contact the shipping agents, after many months we now felt we were on our way. Up to the time we saw the advert, Zambia was a country we had never heard of, we bought an Atlas from a bookshop to find out where it was.

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We went to Yorkshire for a few days to say our goodbyes to relatives and also we needed a break. We also decided to have a small leaving party for our families and friends on November 5th, which seemed appropriate as it was bonfire night. We had a firework display followed by a buffet and drinks. After the leaving party there was nothing to do but wait until the morning of the 11th November. We left from Southtown Station for London, arrived at Liverpool Street Station, travelled by taxi to Victoria Station then took a coach to Heathrow Airport which we flew out of on the 22.00 flight for Lusaka. We had burnt our bridges, there could be no turning back. It is going to be a new beginning and a new chapter in our lives.

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Atomian (Brussels)

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BSA A65 (Dinant) Belgium



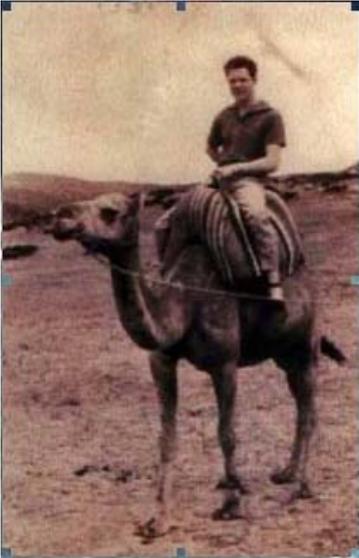
Metz (The village of children)

Katoubia Palace Nightclub Tangier - Morocco

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Entrance to the Casbah, Tangier



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Gt. Yarmouth Market (Long Green Yarmouth Market) (Gone, now illegal)



St. Andrew's College (Outside)

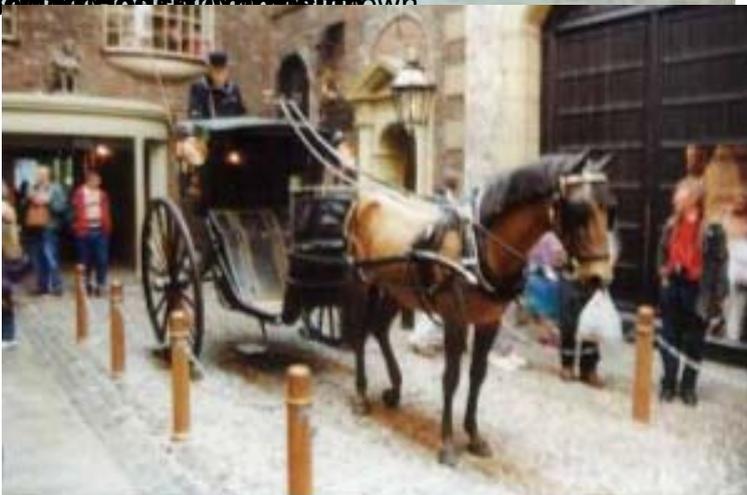
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I was born in Bristol, South West England



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Four Castle Almondbury, Yorkshire