

'Memoirs of a ten pound pom'

The story of our emigration to Australia twice.



Written by

Leonard Charles Reuben Hall

'I have written this for my children and theirs too'



Len Hall, today

With many thanks to my beloved wife Pam who is also my memory and my English Language consultant, if I want to know anything at all I just ask Pam because she knows everything.

To **emigrate** is to leave your country to reside elsewhere. To **immigrate** is to enter and reside in a new country.

E.g. my grandchildren would say, my grandparents emigrated from England. They immigrated to Australia.

My memory trick is to note that immigrants come in, and both "immigrant" and "in" start with the letter "i". My readers will also say that people who emigrate exit a country, and both "emigrate" and "exit" start with "e."

My suggestion is that you make up your own mind about the grammar; I may have got it wrong in some places.

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Prologue

This is not actually an autobiography, but more like a lot of memories from my past that I have compiled over a period of several years, and then sent off to a website known as

www.WalthamstowMemories.net

that is currently operating in the London suburb of Walthamstow E17. That is where I spent the first 23 years of my life, not including my birth year.

When I was a young boy the town of '**Walthamstow**' was a pleasant enough place to live. However, it was never a Garden of Eden but there were some nicely looked after parks and gardens within the borough.

Sadly in modern times the town has become a vastly different place and from my own experience many people from my generation no longer reside there. But they still have feelings of nostalgia for their old haunts as I do.

My adopted place of residence is now in Perth, in Western Australia.

I may repeat myself at times because that is what old farts like me do from time to time, so I hope you will excuse my little foibles when they arise.

Chapter 1

Strolling down 'Memory Lane'

As the old adage states '**absence makes the heart grow fonder**' and when you live as I do, as far from '**Walthamstow E17**' as one can get by living for the last 42 years in Australia, you can get a yearning to go back to your childhood haunts sometimes, and also you may wonder where are all those old school friends and work mates.

Mind you, apart from a few visits over the past 42 years I have absolutely no ambitions to return to the United Kingdom to live permanently. However, I will admit that there are still some very nice places in England where I may have ended up had I chosen to stay over there.

We became '**ten pound poms**' in 1970 when as a family of two adults and 3 children we emigrated from the United Kingdom to Australia for the **FIRST** time. But more of that later on in this story.

At this early stage of my story I hasten to inform you that a 'Pom' is what a 'true blue' Australian person calls anyone who has emigrated from England and come to live in Australia.

The present year of our Lord is now '**2012**' and I am now 74 years old, and when I try and recall things from my past I have to admit that it is not at all easy and the older I am then the harder it gets, I think that accurate dates or even years are a problem and it would have been a lot easier if I had kept a diary, so I thought that I would write this story as a book so that my children and grand children might

understand their origins and why they are who they are if you can understand what I mean.

It may also be entertaining for anyone else who cares to read it too, because I do not object to sharing my experiences with everyone. In fact my life is like an 'open book'.

Experts say that one should be able to recall every day of ones life just like reading a book or peeling an onion layer by layer, however, I beg to differ as there are only certain things that I can recall and I shall endeavor to get them written down here before I forget them too.

I am realizing though that as I touch upon a subject, that little archive opens up and expands and so I can remember a lot more about it. Therefore, I suppose I may digress from the main subject from time to time, so if that irks you just bear with me and I hope you will feel that you have not wasted your time.

This story is about me, and the family that is associated with me, i.e. my progeny so first I must tell you that I was born in '**Rochford Hospital**' which is in the county of Essex in England on the **4th of August 1937**; that date was also the birth day of the old Queen Mother, Elizabeth Bowes Lyon and I shared the day with her every year as long as she lived, however, hers was always publicized but mine wasn't for some reason.

I was christened with the names 'Leonard Charles Reuben Hall' but I am now always called Len. For some reason known only to themselves my parents called me Norman until I met my wife Pam. After that I became Len to everyone.

I was the 2nd son (the first one died before I was born) to **Leonard Joubert Hall and Emily Hall (née Wood)**. I don't know anything about my deceased brother, but if he had survived then I may not be here to tell this story, because I ended up being an only child i.e. no siblings that I know of.

My memories about my parents origins are very vague but I do recall that my father unfortunately only had one eye, I was always informed that this was the result of a childhood disease he had suffered from, and to this day I cannot recall which eye was glass and which was not, but I do know that he used to put the glass eye in a cup next to his false teeth when he went to bed at night time.

Every year he would have to go to '**Moorfields Eye Hospital**' and that is located somewhere in London, and he would come back with a new glass eye. Apparently they used to get worn out, and they had to be replaced when they became too painful to wear. It was a touchy subject and my dad never revealed the real details to me. It is somehow not quite the same as talking about a set of false teeth.

Strange as it seems both of my parents were completely toothless and they always wore a full set of false dentures, whereas I still have all my own teeth, this is due to modern day additives to our drinking water like Fluoride I suppose.

My parents were really wonderful mentors and I grew up with a great sense of fair play and a Christian outlook towards most other human beings and animals, and they really loved their pets, these would be various dogs that they owned, and rabbits but the latter were also a source of food and my father was able to kill and eat a rabbit without a pang of conscience and that is something that I could never do. The skins of the rabbits were also used to make mittens when the hide

was dried and cured my dad never wasted anything if it could be used in some way. We never owned a cat as far as I can remember; I do not know why that was.

With both parents at work during my childhood I never really wanted for anything, but they still had to live rather frugally as they never really earned a high wage. As an example they never ever bought me a new bicycle and the first one I did own came from a street market somewhere near a place called Dalston Junction. I never ever bought a complete new bicycle and years later I would be a frequent visitor to Frank Lipscomb's bicycle shop in Markhouse Road near Longfellow Road. Frank Lipscomb was a past champion with the Century Road club and his wife Rita used to serve in the shop whilst Frank built bikes and frames. It was Frank who suggested that I start to compete in time trials and I had my first race in an event called 'the Century Novices 25'. I shall tell you more about my cycling career later in my memoirs.

Every year my dad would book up for a holiday somewhere near the coast and I can recall that we took trips to Hastings and other south coast seaside resorts such as the Isle of Wight and also to Westward Ho in Devon, where we would live in a sort of permanently constructed tent that was big enough for a very large family to live in, this was on an organized camping site quite close to the sea. We went to Wales once too and Cheddar and my mum and dad loved to go on bus tours when I was older and going my own way as children do.

Forgive me whilst I digress for a moment as an archive has just opened up with a vivid memory of an event later in my life.

When I was married later in my life to Pamela, we took our first born child Fenella to Westward Ho and Biddeford in the Ford 100E van that we owned for a while. In those days there were no restrictions about car baby seats and so she made the journey in a vinyl carry cot in the back of the van without any restraints of course, but she survived. This would have been in 1961.

Whilst we were there something went terribly wrong with the car's engine and it would over heat and boil after running for a while. We were informed by a local crafty garage proprietor that the head gasket had blown. Alas as we had no money at the time we decided to take a chance and drive home.

Now Fenella was only a few months old at the time so she would not remember any of this but I had to stop every 15 minutes on the way home to wait for the radiator to cool down enough to top it up again. I had fixed the radiator drain tube so that it poked up through the side of the propped up car engine cover, thus I could see when the radiator started to splutter and boil.

The trip took over ten hours and we slept in the car.

When we finally arrived back at home we presented the car to a local Garage in Waltham Abbey for a diagnosis, this time the man flushed out the radiator and the car was good again. And no big bills either.

Now where was I? Oh yes back to my parents again.

My dad's favourite hobby was '**history**' and he would take me to all of the historical places in London so that I might share his enthusiasm

about the subject, and we regularly spent our days whilst we were there looking at the major tourist spots as they are today. We saw The Tower of London and Westminster Abbey and Saint Paul's Cathedral and many more interesting places; my favourite was Madame Tussaud's Wax Works.

We would also spend many hours in the British Museum and the Natural History Museum and also the Imperial war museum.

He had quite a big book library of historical subjects and if I close my eyes I can see him now reading a book with the pages held about **100mm** (4") from his face so that he could read with his one eye that had about 25% vision in it. He did try wearing spectacles, but for some reason they were never successful. He was as they say these days '**Legally blind**' however, he never once complained to me about his misfortune.

As far as I can remember the only times my parents ever went to church would have been when they were married and I know they were married because I have a copy of their marriage certificate, and they also came to Saint Mary's church in Cheshunt when my wife and I were married in 1960.

I am unsure which religion my mum believed in but I know that my dad was an atheist and he never had any time for God. But like most United Kingdom residents in those days he would decorate the living room at Christmas time with paper decorations and hanging balls etc. They also had a small Christmas tree that was artificial and they kept that for many years. When I got married to Pam they gave that tree to us and to my dismay it had a nail in the base that put a large scratch on our new wooden side board.

My dad got that furniture for us at a much reduced cost from his company employers who were Austinsuite the furniture makers; we bought a very nice lounge suite and a very stylish Dining room suite. But I shall tell you more about that and my dad's job at Austinsuite later.

However, they did urge me to attend the local Sunday school sessions at the Mission Hall in Markhouse Road when I was old enough; I suppose this did enable them to have some quality time together on Sunday afternoons without me being in the way.

Not that I spent much time with them as a boy because I always had my mates from the local area to play with. No one worried about their kids at that time and we would roam around the Walthamstow Marshes fishing for sticklebacks and frogs etc. Actually we did meet up with a pervert on one trip to the marshes but nothing came of it and we just told our parents when we arrived home about the strange man who we had met down by the marshes.

We would also go to Highams Park lakes via the steam trains on the railway line from St. James Street station, and when I got older we went on our '**home made**' scooters, just imagine that. It must have been about a 15km round trip. And as far as I can recall no one ever went missing or was abused.

My mother was a Lancashire lass and she always pronounced 'bottle' as bockle and 'kettle' as keckle but I suppose it was just the local dialect up there. She was born in a town called Nelson which is close to Pendle Hill which is a notable landmark in the area I was told. I do recall going up there for a holiday when I was a very young boy, but I have never been able to make contact with any of my mum's relatives. I have always wondered how my mum and dad met each

other and that is something that I shall never know now. I think it would have made a very interesting story.

For a while my maternal grandmother lived in the same area as us but she died when I was very young I believe. I do recall that she was a volunteer at The Saint John's Ambulance Society and there was a branch in Willow Walk which is off The High Street. She would take me there on occasions too. I think it was opposite to Stevens the florist's shop.

Actually my mother was a very loving mum and although she worked in a factory most of the time she still had plenty of time for me. When I started school at the **'Queen's Road infant's school'** in Walthamstow she would take me there on the back of her bike every morning until I was old enough to make the trip of about a two kilometres by myself, I would have been around 6 years old then I think.

The first day at school sticks in my memory, because when we arrived at the school I was desperate for a pee and my mum let me do it in the gutter outside of the school. Unfortunately the head mistress saw me doing this and she gave my mum a real good telling off for letting me do it.

My memories of that school are very vague but I do remember learning how to tell the time from an analogue wall clock, and how to tie up my shoe laces. These are simple skills that have stood by me all of my life. My own grandchildren cannot tie shoe laces at 10 years of age because they have Velcro fastening shoes and they were never taught how to do this simple task.

A few years ago an old school friend named Iris Palmer (nee Ives) sent me lots of old school photographs, you know the ones where we would stand in rows with the big kids at the back and the teacher off to one side, and I then realized that some of the children whom I recognised in the photographs were with me at that school, and they stayed with me throughout my school years at Gamuel Road School and Markhouse Road Secondary Modern School after that.

Iris Ives was one such girl and another was Doreen Pavitt whom I remember as a beautiful girl whose birthday was the same day as mine and that is **August the 4th 1937**.

Another old school friend with whom I still communicate by email is Jean Brown (nee Truman), Jean now lives in Norfolk. I have made contact with some of my old school friends on the website called www.friendsreunited.net but alas many of them have now passed away.

When I was a young boy my mum worked for a long time at a fish preparation factory in Lea Bridge Road and this had its good and bad points.

One good thing was that we ate plenty of fish because the factory staff were allowed to buy the produce at a reduced rate I suppose, and I was introduced to a Jewish delicacy called '**Rollmops**' which were herrings pickled in vinegar. The company also used to produce a lot of special food for the Jewish Kosher market. The downside was that she nearly always smelt of fish and that was not very nice.

My mum was always a bit overweight and maybe that is why she suffered a stroke when I was about 20 years old and she was in hospital for a while. Although she recovered enough to be able to speak quite well, and she was able to walk and still look after us, she was never quite the same mentally and she became rather slow in

many ways. My dad had many rows with shopkeepers when they lost patience with her when she took too long deciding what she wanted to buy.

Sadly for us all my mum passed away when I was living in Sydney many years later and I shall get to that in due course. I think that when we emigrated she would have just thought that we would be back the next week, and I always felt very guilty about that, because I never saw her again.

Later in this story I shall tell you how my son Jeremy and his family left us and returned to the United Kingdom to live, and when that happened I realized just how my mum and dad must have felt about the situation.

I think some of the ethnic families in Australia had the right idea when they emigrated they took everyone with them so that no one was left behind to be lonely.

Anyway back to the story. At the time of my birth my parents lived near Wickford in Essex in a farm cottage somewhere and probably due to my father's poor eyesight which gave him only 25% vision he had to work as a farm labourer. At that time he was a cowherd on a farm near Wickford, I think that meant he looked after the cattle and did the milking jobs etc.

Actually I don't remember any of that of course as I was only a baby and I am only going on what I was told in later years.

My grandmother Daisy Hall and her de-facto partner who was named Dan Ryder lived in a very run down two storey semi-detached cottage

in Runwell road near Wickford and my grandmother was still there when I was about 22 years of age, Dan had passed away a few years before that. I think that my grandmother may have moved to Wickford when she separated from my grandfather a few years later, after I was born.

Apparently due to a great shortage of work in the rural area when I was only about one or two years old my parents decided to move to Walthamstow E17, after a short time living in a house in Springfield Road with my paternal grandfather, they moved to **101, Markhouse Road**, my grandfather was living there until he died but I can't remember a thing about him apart from his moustache, but I do know that he was a boxer in the army and one reason he separated from my Grandmother was because he used her as a punch bag at times.

I did hear some terrible tales about that man, and one was that he would bring home a prostitute and throw my Gran out of the house whilst he had his way with her. I think everyone was happy on the day that he passed away.

One disaster did happen to me when we were living with my grandfather when I was about three years old, and I have a large scar on my face to prove it, although I don't remember the accident when it happened.

The story I was told was that my grandfather had asked the local fishmonger if he could have some fish boxes to use as firewood, and this obliging man just drove his cart up the alleyway behind the house, and he then threw the boxes over the back fence.

Of course as a young boy I was intrigued by these boxes that were coming over the fence until one hit me in the face. I almost lost my

right eye due to the accident and had that been the case my dad and I would have been a matched pair, I was left with a large horizontal scar near my right eye.

Not long after that accident my parents decided to move away from my grandfather and they started to rent a rather squalid little flat in Markhouse Road. The address was number '**101, Markhouse Road**' and it is still there to this day.

I have been informed that the whole area where I used to live is now populated by the '**Muslim community**', and the occupants of my former home will probably be thinking that they are living in the lap of luxury I am sure.

The access to this flat, was and still is, down a little laneway that runs parallel with Markhouse Road and this is accessed from Ringwood road.

I looked it up on 'Google Earth' recently, and the alley is now called **Bett's Mews**, there is a factory that used to make metal items when I lived there, this is situated at the end of the alleyway and it also exits at Queens Road near The Common Gate Hotel or public house as it was when I lived there, but there was always a high gate there that we used to climb over.

I can never forget that the fence along the alleyway, that shielded our building from the hordes of workers walking to work up the alley was constructed from many normal internal doors from houses all joined together.

Actually thanks to modern technology I have just gone back to my old address, with '**Google Earth**' as stated just now and it is amazing how I was able to zoom up to the back of the building, which now has more structures on the garden where we had our air raid shelter and where my dad used to grow some enormous Dahlia flowers.

The shop at **101 Markhouse Road** used to be a lamp shade retail shop but it is now a betting shop called 'Star Racing Bookmakers' and would you believe that what was **Davis's Dairy** is now called '**Patel's Dairy**' (OMG).

Opposite my old home where Pollard's Paint shop used to be is a store called Markhouse Food and Wine. Oh well I suppose that is what you would now call progress.

When I was older at around 22 years of age I bought my first car, which actually was a '**Ford 100E 5cwt van**', it was bright red in colour and it had two seats in the front and an illegal bench seat in the back and of course at that time there were no seat belts at all. There were no windows in the sides of the back of the van either.

My dad helped me to construct a large gate in the fence made out several of the doors that were wide enough for me to drive the van into our garden, where it would be safe from vandals. It was only an old van but to me it was a mode of transport, and I could load bikes inside it and on top of it on a roof rack when we went to bike races. I bought the van from a cycling mate named **Len Finch** who used to live in Billet Road and apart from a few scratches it was in quite good condition.

I was a real novice with cars and I recall one morning the van's motor was roaring away at twice the normal speed when I started it up, and

I was so worried that I drove it over to Len's home so that I could ask his opinion of this problem. When I demonstrated the noise he just said that I should push the '**choke**' in. That was in the old days of course before automatic chokes were invented. Another time I drove over a bottle and made a huge cut in the tyre, this was repaired with a large patch called a Gator. That would not be allowed today of course.

I kept the van for several years and when Pam and I were living in our first house, and desperate for money we sold it to my mate **Del Conner** for about 50 pounds.

I once saw a car in Ringwood Road that had been the subject of an attack by vandals, as it had a tin of yellow paint turned upside down on the roof and the paint was all over the car. The owner must have upset someone at one time; he had probably parked in the wrong place for too long. There were some nasty people living in that area at the time I think.

In hindsight putting those gates up in the fence would have been quite a hard thing for my dad to do with such poor eyesight, but he was a very practical man and between us we did the job. His handy man skills have been passed onto me and now I help my own boys with their problems when they arise.

The flat that we lived in comprised one large room above the shop at street level below, my dad divided this large room into two bedrooms with a wooden framework that he clad with chipboard. He thought it was sound proof but I can vouch for the fact that it was not.

The windows from that upstairs room looked across the road to what used to be Pollards the paint shop. The windows from both rooms

were overlooking Markhouse Road and it was a very busy road but the noise never stopped me from sleeping.

As there was no toilet upstairs, any urgent calls of nature during the night would have to result in a long trek down the stairs, tip toeing past the other families rooms and out to the WC outside the building. I have to admit that we used to use a bucket or a jerry that was taken upstairs when we went to bed.

Downstairs when you approached the flat from the alley way you at first walked past the WC, then you came to the 'front' door and upon entering that there was a scullery come kitchen and bathroom all rolled into one and there was a huge iron bath against one wall, we used that once a week whether we needed a bath or not. I used be first in then my mum, and finally my dad, because he was always the dirtiest. In this room there was also a Butler sink and a cooking stove that was installed where at one time a fireplace was located.

The Butler sink was used for all the other chores like washing up and personal hygiene and shaving etc.

One modern appliance they did have was a small refrigerator, and that is something that Pam and I never had until we reached Australia, when we lived in our first house in Bishops Stortford we just never had use for one as Pam shopped for food almost every day. Sometimes I would stop off at the corner shop when we lived at Bishops Stortford and buy a block of Walls ice cream as a special treat.

Meanwhile back to Markhouse road where there was a huge cupboard in the scullery and I think it was probably meant to be a pantry but my dad kept it full of junk. My mates and I used it as a kids den too at one time, and we would sit in there and read comics with the light of a torch, strange the things boys will do for a laugh.

Also on the ground floor was a small living room, and that was where my dad had the 12 inch Baird television, and his record player and sound equipment, and it was all connected with plugs and sockets piggy backed together, and I am amazed that we never had a house fire in the years that I lived there.

We were quick off the mark with our television and my dad bought this floor mounted set that was quite hard to see, unless you put this magnifying thing in front of it that was like a huge magnifying glass on a stand. There were table top sets available but these were considered to be not quite the thing to buy.

Of course in those days there were only black and white transmissions and it was like that for years until colour was invented. We used to have yet another device in front of the screen that introduced several colours to the picture but it was all very primitive stuff.

The first ever programme that I ever watched on television was called '**Kaleidoscope**' and it was a children's show that was put on every day after school.

My dad used to wallpaper the living room every other year, and the room got smaller every year because he never stripped the old wallpaper off the walls, but just put the new stuff on top of the old. This room was big enough for a few armchairs and it had a window looking out to the yard outside which was next to Davis's Dairy. This was a drab corrugated iron wall that had holes in it and it had been insulated with small pieces of cork that were continually escaping

from the wall. I think that it must have been a sort of 'cool room' for the dairy stock.

The rooms upstairs were reached by an internal staircase that went past the other family occupant's home and I would sometimes pass them on my way to bed which was very embarrassing. Most times I would run up those stairs as fast as I could with the hope that nobody emerged from the two doors in their part of the house.

This other families home was an equally squalid flat in the same building that had the same sort of accommodation as ours, and everyone had to use the same toilet, when they wanted to use the toilet they had to go down to the garden via a flight of concrete steps that had been built outside of their home and if I heard anyone coming down the stairs whilst I was using the toilet, I would always start whistling and that would warn them that the place was occupied.

There was never any toilet paper in the WC and I think at that time everyone would use torn up newspapers for doing what was required. Maybe it was not available or maybe my dad could not afford to buy it.

The occupier of the shop on Markhouse Road didn't use the toilet as far as I know, so God only knows what he did for a toilet but he did have a wash basin in a little outhouse I recall, so maybe he used that.

My parents rented this awful place for about 25 years from the man who lived next door who was a Jewish man named Mr. Cohen. My dad paid him 25 shillings a week to live there and they were as happy as pigs in clover, but I hated it so much that when I walked home from school with my friends I would walk straight past the alleyway,

and I always returned back later on so that no one knew where I lived. You see most of my mates and school mates had a house or a flat and a proper front door entry but all we had was this awful alley and the wall of doors to get past. I suppose one could say that at that time I suffered from an **inferiority complex**. But not any more though, I am pleased to report.

It would not have been quite so bad if my parents had got on sociably with the other family in the building who lived above us, but he rowed with them all the time about things like a dirty WC and noise etc. because there was only a wood floor between them and us, once I banged on the ceiling with a broom handle and a large piece of plaster fell off the ceiling.

Imagine how it was when we suffered an air raid during the war years and we had to spend the night with them in a tiny Anderson shelter. But there will be more about that episode later.

Just because my dad had extremely poor eyesight, and as a result he could never drive a car it did not restrict our activities and my parents went everywhere on bicycles, My parents used to ride to work on their bikes every day too, and one morning my dad was knocked down by a car on the junction of Markhouse Road and Ringwood Road as he left the home for work. And he ended up in hospital with a broken leg. He soon recovered though and I think he was a bit more careful after that.

They also had a tandem bicycle and some Sundays they would put me in the child seat on the back of the tandem, and hitch up a small box trailer that my dad had made from a wooden tea chest and off we would go to High Beech and places like that. I am always quite proud when I think about my mum and dad getting out and about the way

they did, nothing seemed to stop them enjoying life, and that always included the dog too.

The trailer was for Mickey our little dog who enjoyed the trip as much as we did. When I think about those trips I suppose it is much the same as when Pam and I go out on our tandem as we did this morning. The big difference is that at the time of writing this Pam is 73 and I am 74 years old.

As a small boy I was always entranced by the High Beech area and there was a pub there called '**Dick Turpin's Cave**' where he is said to have hidden once. And also there is a large hollow Oak tree known as '**King Charles's Oak**' where the king is supposed to have hidden at one time. These were all legends of course.

Another great pub was '**The Owl Inn**' and that had an unusual feature in the beer garden that was designed to catch the children as they sat there with their lemonade and crisps.

The trick was that there was a large water tank there with a notice above it stating '**PLEASE DO NOT TEASE THE WATER OTTER**'. Like me most kids are curious so they would grab the chain that was entering the murky water and when they yanked it up they would only find a rusty old kettle on the end. Do you get the joke? It was after all a water hotter of a different kind.

Now there was a down side to this tandem riding with me on the back in a child seat because in those days child seats were not as safe as they are today, and my legs would rest upon two stirrups at each side of the seat.

Nowadays these seats are constructed to very rigid standards for safety reasons and the child's legs are held safe with a metal surround and the legs are restricted with Velcro straps so that a small child cannot move its legs into a dangerous position. What happened to me one day on the way home from High Beech was that I fell asleep as we were riding along and my right leg slipped of the stirrup and my foot went into the back wheel of the tandem.

My foot was shredded and the spokes in the back wheel tore off lots of the skin around my ankle, and it was a real mess apparently, but fortunately the accident happened near a doctors surgery where I was given immediate first aid and that saved my foot I was told.

I have a huge scar now all over my right ankle but apart from that I got off quite well I think.

I shall tell you more about my recovery later.

Chapter 2

Walthamstow, E17 & Wickford, Essex

Usually about once a month my mum and dad would take me on a **City Coach** to visit my Grandmother who lived near to Wickford. This bus would depart from Walthamstow in the morning and take us directly to Wickford where we would disembark.

We would get off the bus in Wickford and walk the two miles to my Grandmother's house that was located somewhere along Runwell Road. Sometimes my dad would buy sweets at a house which was also a shop along the way and he would meet up with his old friends from the days when we all lived there many years ago.

I actually went to look for the place where my grandmother lived once when we went over there on a holiday years ago, I think it was on the junction of the A130 and the A132 highways. All of the old houses had long ago been demolished and there was a beautiful home built there now.

My dad's poor eyesight always prevented him from ever driving a car but anyway we could never have afforded to buy one as money was always in short supply.

But when we were staying at my grand mother's house that didn't stop the family from walking to either '**the Quart pot**' public house which was near to Wickford, or '**The Hawk Inn**' at Battlesbridge for a few beers.

The walk to the Hawk Inn was very pleasant because we always used the public footpaths and we walked across the fields to get there. The public footpath system is something that has been there for many years and as long as you shut gates and don't do any damage to crops or livestock everyone is happy.

Of course public house rules were different back then, because children of my age were not allowed into a licensed public house, and I would always have to sit outside the pub with a glass of lemonade and a packet of Smiths Crisps or an Arrowroot biscuit to keep me quiet for a while.

It was always a mystery to me as a child as to why they went to pubs but I suppose it was a social gathering mostly.

As I got older I would be allowed to wander off by myself and explore the Battlesbridge area which was a tidal estuary and there were always crabs and things to find. In fact the countryside was a boy's paradise in my younger days and I would wander along the highways and footpaths all by myself.

My Grandmother always seemed to be very old to me, and she had terrible bunions and corns on her feet, and sometimes she would let us walk home from the pub by ourselves and she would get either a lift home or a taxi if she could afford it.

The old house where she lived was one half of a semi-detached pair of farm cottages and the other half was derelict and nobody ever lived there. I used to go in there at times and it was a complete shambles.

I think the part my Gran lived in was also condemned as there was no running water or electricity in the house and we would have to take a

bucket up to a stand pipe near the road for all the water used in the house.

If I had been older I would have fashioned a way of getting the water closer to the house for convenience. But it never changed all the time we were going there. Every drop of water that was used in the house would have to be carried in a bucket about 50 metres from the stand pipe tap that was by the front gate on Runwell Road.

The house toilet or '**dunny**' as we call them in Australia was located at the bottom of the garden and it was a small shed that had just a bucket placed underneath a board with a hole in it for a seat. Very primitive you might say and as it was a very large garden I never used it unless I was absolutely desperate. The garden hedges were full of stinging nettles so I had to be careful though.

To help make ends meet my grandmother took in two cash paying lodgers, and one was named Peter and the other one was named Ian and he was Scottish. My dad liked Ian but he thought Peter was a waste of space. Now when we went there to see my grandmother it was usually an overnight stay, and all three of us would sleep for the night in the same bed which was only a normal double bed.

Actually it was usually Ian's bed and so he would have to either sleep on a settee or somewhere else but he never complained.

I remember that once Ian got drunk and he arrived home so late that they would not let him into the house, so he slept all night in the dunny on the floor.

As there was never any electricity in the house they relied upon paraffin lamps for illumination and as soon as it got dark out came the old lamps, Some of these were quite ornate in design, these gave a very dim light but it was enough to see around the place and we would sometimes play card games or board games. We used candles when we went '**up the wooden hill**' (stairs) to go to bed. Except my grandmother who couldn't climb the stairs as she had arthritis all over her body I think, she would refer to the pain as her 'screws' for some reason.

I have already told you that I don't remember my paternal Grandfather because he died of alcohol poisoning when I was very young, so my Grandmother had a defacto relationship with a nice old guy named Dan Ryder. He always gave me sixpence when we left the house after a weekend in Wickford.

Dan always seemed old to me and he never walked far and he spent most of his time in an armchair sitting by the fireplace. Actually it was one of those old black iron stoves where they cooked all their food on it and it had an oven and the kettles sat on top of it.

Now Dan was a crafty old character who was always trying to catch the neighbour's kids who came into the large one acre garden to steal fruit from the numerous fruit trees that were very well established around the place. Dan finally found a way of stopping the kids from stealing from him because he would spread the contents of the untreated sewage from the dunny around the base of the trees and that fixed the problem.

He would say that this served as a solution for pest control and fertilizer all at once.

My grandmother used to sell the apples and the pears that they salvaged from the fruit trees at the gate near the road and she had an old type scale with weights that she used to measure out the right quantities to passers by when they stopped to buy fruit from her. Of course they never knew how the fruit was fertilised I am pleased to say.

We usually left my grandmother's house on Sunday afternoons so that I could go back to school and my parents could return to work the next day. So we would walk the two miles into Wickford and I was usually well asleep on the journey home.

Next door to our building in Markhouse Road on the corner of Ringwood Road was a grocery shop called '**Davis's Dairy**', that was not true of course because a dairy is a farm that you expect to find in the country, but they did sell milk and other farm produce in the shop, there were various shops along the section of road between Ringwood road and Queens Road and at the far end was '**The Common Gate**' public house so I suppose there must have been an area of common land there for grazing animals there at some time in the past.

This pub was another place where I would be left outside with a glass of lemonade and a bag of Smith's Crisps (if you were lucky you would get two blue bags of salt with your crisps) nowadays I never touch the stuff as I am a lot older and wiser. To this day I have never ever been inside the Common Gate which is now a hotel I believe.

Diagonally opposite the pub there was a church called '**The Lighthouse**' this was and still is a Methodist church where I would spend many a happy hour as a member of the Boy's Brigade. I believe the light at the top of the building is still functioning at certain

times just like a real lighthouse by the seaside. It made a change from a church with a bell.

Opposite the church was the post office which for many years we frequented to buy our **'postal orders'** (I usually asked for a post order) and our stamps etc. Then the inevitable thing happened and the post office was taken over by a Pakistani family, and when that occurred my dad steadfastly refused to go in there again.

I think that around the mid 1950's a lot of Pakistani people started taking over the local shops and the whole area began to be populated by several different races, these included the West Indians and many other creeds, and of course with them came lots of racial problems that have got steadily worse and worse over the years. I am told that the area where I used to reside is mainly occupied by the Muslim race now so I am very pleased that we left the area when we did.

My dad was a lot like the character Alf Garnet who was portrayed by the actor Warren Mitchell, if you can recall any of the **'Till Death do us Part'** series you will know how my dad was. I can recall some of his mannerisms and they were the same as my dad's were at the time.

Just a few yards from our hovel in Markhouse Road was a small shop located in Ringwood Road that was operated by an old lady named Mrs. Golding and it was actually a house turned into a shop, and I can still shut my eyes and imagine the aromas of paraffin and bundles of firewood and stuff like that were her stock in trade.

She obviously had a loyal band of customers because she competed with the Dairy down the road.

The whole shop was full of produce and she used to serve us via a small counter in the middle of all this stuff for sale.

At the end of her working day she would walk up Ringwood road pushing a small basket on wheels to where ever she lived and I never did know where that was. She probably had the day's takings in that basket, but that was in the days before people were mugged or had things stolen from them.

Chapter 3

Old Friends and playmates

I absolutely hated living where we did in Markhouse Road which you now know was behind and above a shop, and I envied my friends Derek Rose and Arthur Brown and another lad named Peter Lipman because they lived in Warner flats in Callis Road, and I also had a friend named Alan Upex who lived in a real house in Ringwood Road that was actually owned by his granddad.

Another friend named Terry Downs also lived in a Warner flat in Ringwood Road, Terry died young I was told which was a shame because he was a clever boy but his parents were snobs. Alan Upex also died young I was told because I set out to find these guys a few years ago. I shall tell you more about this quest later on.

When the 2nd world war was over we had VE day which was victory in Europe and VJ day which was victory over Japan.

On both of these occasions the residents of Ringwood Road organized a big street party to celebrate and as I lived just around the corner in Markhouse Road they were considerate enough to invite me to the parties.

I do recall that there was a stage show and an enormous bonfire going all night and of course there was plenty of party food for us

kids. Those fires left huge scars in the road surface that were visible for years afterwards.

My best friend in those days was a lad named '**Arthur Brown**' who lived in Callis Road, and we were very close friends up until the time I left school and started work. Because I was an '**only child**' my dad often included Arthur in our outings, and one year he even came on holiday with us when we went to Westward Ho. We had our fights at times and I still have a scar on my leg where he bit me once.

Now a few years ago I had a burning desire to find some of my old friends and I inserted an advertisement into the **Walthamstow Guardian** in which I named all of the old playmates. I gave my email address and asked them to contact me.

Well my advert was noticed by a girl named Rita who also used to live in Callis Road and she contacted Arthur Brown and he eventually sent me an email.

Over 50 years had passed since I had last seen or spoke to Arthur so I telephoned him at his home, which was now in Launceston in Cornwall where he had retired to. Arthur really did surprise me when we started talking on the telephone because he had no trace of a cockney dialect and he was so well read and opinioned about so many things that I wondered if he was the same guy.

Apparently Arthur had become a London Cabbie and he had '**the knowledge**', and he had retired well off enough to buy the 16th century farmhouse in which he now lived.

As we were going to take a trip to the United Kingdom the very next year we arranged to meet and as we were staying in '**Newquay**' for a week, Arthur and his wife Mavis and his youngest son Shaun came

and joined us for the afternoon that we had free in our itinerary. We caught up the past 50 years in about 3 hours that day.

I was so sad to hear the next year that Arthur had suffered a stroke and he passed away a few weeks later.

In those days no one seemed to object to us kids begging for money and our little gang would make the most of '**Guy Fawkes Night**', and beg with our guy who was made up from old clothes and moved around on a soapbox trolley outside the local pubs for hours on end. It was worth it though and of course we always spent our takings on fireworks which were available without restrictions to children in those days.

Another source of pocket money would be made by begging outside the local pubs with a **Grotto**, this would be constructed around a couple of paving stones outside the pub entrance and it would be made from flowers and moss stolen from several neighbours front gardens in the dead of night.

The Grotto would be a pretty arrangement made into a miniature garden and passers by would be taunted with the plaintive cry of '**Penny for the Grotto mister**'.

To this day I don't know how this custom originated but the proceeds were good especially from the American servicemen who were visiting the local brothels in the area.

After a short time at the Queens Road infant's school I began going to a school in Gamuel Road and I started there when I was about 7

years old. The school was easily accessible as it was a short walk along Callis Road and then across the Queen's Road recreation ground and I was there in about five minutes. We had some good fun in that rec and cricket against a tree was what took up a lot of our spare time.

Derek Rose was a wizard at bowling and when facing a ball that could bounce up from a stone it was a bit hazardous at times. There was also a playground area with some rides that today would never be allowed.

The slide was enormous and to fall from the little cabin at the top would mean certain death or at least some breakages. The umbrella shaped roundabout was terrible for injuring legs and there were others and of course the ground was just asphalt. Unlike parks today that are un-supervised, this one was always looked after by Ernie the park keeper who spent a lot of his time in his little hut brewing tea for the old guys who dropped in for a chat. However, I do recall one rare incident when a pervert went into the girls toilet block and Ernie quickly apprehended him and the police took him away. Next door to the rec was an area of land called 'the allotments' where locals could grow vegetables etc.

They have similar things in Australia now but they are known as communal gardens.

It was about then that I started having trouble seeing the black board in the classroom and I was diagnosed as being '**short sighted**' that meant that I had to wear spectacles and of course as children can be very cruel the term '**four eyes**' was used quite a lot.

I was extremely self conscious about wearing my glasses and they would be put straight into my pocket as soon as I left the classroom. As you will read later this all changed when I was about 70 years old.

Those childhood years from the age of seven to eleven were wonderful times and the summer holidays were some of the most memorable of my childhood years.

My little gang would hike down to the marshes and fish in the drainage ditches for tiddlers, and sometimes we would climb over the forbidding fences to fish in '**the New River**' where we would fish for Perch which was an extremely aggressive type of fish.

This river or water passage was used for supplying drinking water from the nearby reservoirs and it was a very deep and fast flowing river, luckily we never fell in it or got caught trespassing there.

My mum and dad were both working at that time and I suppose you could have called me a '**latch key**' kid but that didn't worry me at all. My mum at that time worked at a soft drink company known as Corona's in Staffa Road and on a hot summer day we would go there and my mum would buy us a bottle of lemonade.

My dad worked as a labourer at a furniture company called '**Austinsuite**' situated in Argall Avenue and to give him his correct job title he was a '**timber porter**', and his job was to move huge lengths of timber on his shoulders and stack them in piles so that they could dry out prior to being turned into quality furniture.

In hindsight this job would have been almost the lowest paid job available but I think his bosses must have been taught how a worker/boss relationship should work, because one night my dad came home from work on his bike as usual and he was so full of self importance because I remember him telling my mum that Mr. Cyril (the boss's Christian name) had told my dad that he was extremely

pleased with the very straight and safe way that my dad was stacking his timber.

Someone once said that whatever your job is, just attempt to be the very best at doing what you do.

Chapter 4

My daily chores after school

As I got older I was given more responsibility by my parents and I often had to do chores for my mum and dad whilst they were at work, and one of these was to take and collect the '**bag wash**' from the laundry shop in Markhouse road, sometimes the bag would be worn out and they would mark up a new one with **101M** on the side with very thick ink.

In those days not very many people owned washing machines, and so once a week we would put all of our soiled clothes into a large Hessian sack and take it to the bag wash laundry. There they would put it all into a huge washing machine and then when it was done it would be put back into the sack ready for collection. The sacks always started off as a brown colour and after a few washes they became almost white so I suppose they must have washed the sack at the same times as the clothing.

Another far more difficult task was to go and get a bag of Coke from the Gasworks in Lea Bridge road. This was quite a long walk and my little hand made cart was very heavy by the time I arrived home with it.

When the gas was produced from coal the result was a substance known as Coke which was still able to burn and give off considerable heat.

Nowadays of course there are at least two or more other definitions of the word Coke that I know of.

This job that I did would have been around the early 1950's but in 1952 there was a very bad **Smog** period that killed 4000 people in the 4 days that it was in London. In 1956 the '**clean air act**' came into being and the burning of household and industrial coal was banned due to the smog we used to get in London at that time.

A London **SMOG** just had to be experienced to know what I am talking about now.

You see at certain times of the year the poisonous gases that were being emitted by the household and industrial use of coal would mix with the moisture in the air and produce a thick acrid substance that was actually killing people who suffered from chest ailments, such as Asthma, emphysema and Bronchiectasis and other problems like that.

Without a word of a lie I have experienced smog that was so thick that it was impossible to drive a car in it, and even when riding my bike through it I would find it difficult. Visibility would be reduced to about two metres and the smog swirled around so that sometimes it was even less than that.

There were some times when I have left my work place around 5pm and I have had to creep along with the kerb on my left and find my way home by instinct. I have had motorists who were only to glad to follow my rear light so that they could stay mobile. If they were to use their headlights it would just bounce the light back as though they were shining them onto a wall. In Australia there are some imported cars that are fitted with fog lights on the front and rear, but it is illegal to use them unless there is a fog and the chances of getting one in Perth is very remote.

When we did get coal delivered and that was before the ban on coal was introduced, I recall that the coalman would carry these huge 1cwt

sacks of coal through the house on his back and dump it into a cupboard under the stairs. That was where the electricity meter was located too, and we always had to have a good supply of shillings on hand to keep the electric lights working.

After many years of having wet coal under the stairs I think the floor boards must have rotted away, because I recall that one day we had to move out of the house for a while, and this was so that all the floor boards in the living room and under the stairs could be replaced with a floor of solid concrete.

I suppose our landlord Mr. Cohen was annoyed but he never said much about it at the time, he probably claimed it on his insurance anyway.

He lived next door and due to the many conflicts that went on between his family and mine I grew up hating all Jewish people and conservatives. These days it is just the conservatives who annoy me.

Just recently I read an excellent book entitled 'The Book Thief' written by Marcus Zusack and that changed my lifetime attitude towards both the Jewish and the German races. They were not all bad so it seems.

Mr. Cohen's daughter in law opened up a dress shop in the premises in front of their home, and his grandson who was rather effeminate became a women's hairdresser I was told years later.

My dad finally stopped using the coal fire in the living room and he boarded up the fireplace and bought an electric fire which we used instead.

During the **Second World War** when the air raid siren sounded as it often did we used to spend our nights in the '**Anderson Shelter**' that had been dug into the back garden. This was a concrete based thing with corrugated iron over the top of it; Earth was then piled on top of the corrugated iron and that made the shelter almost blast proof. There were double decked bunks inside it that we slept on and they were very uncomfortable because they just had a wire base with a thin mattress on top. This was quite an ordeal because we had to share it with the family that lived upstairs and my dad hated them all. This was the family who shared our W.C. too. Sorry if I have already mentioned this before.

My mate Arthur Brown's family did not have an Anderson Shelter in their garden because they had chicken sheds all over the garden and they did not have room for one, so they had a '**Morrison shelter**' in their living room.

These Morrison shelters doubled up as a kitchen table and they were just about big enough for a double mattress to go in. They had a wire mesh around them to prevent debris entering the sleeping area if they were bombed.

As Arthur's family comprised of his mum and dad and three kids it would have been rather crowded inside that shelter I think.

These iron shelters were designed to be strong enough to support the falling house if it was ever hit by a bomb, but had there been a fire the occupants would have all perished in a direct hit situation.

There were many places around Walthamstow during the war where houses had been bombed, and then all of the rubble was removed and it was replaced by hastily constructed brick built water reservoirs so that fire fighters had a ready supply of water to put out fires during and after an air raid. These always had a barbed wire fence around the top to stop people swimming in them.

One dark night I remember walking up Markhouse Road under my dad's overcoat to watch as St. Saviours church got badly burned during an air raid (well I think that is what started it anyway). I know the church survived because years later I had to put up the **banns** there for my forthcoming wedding on **August the 27th, 1960** to my wife Pam.

Fortunately our flat never got bombed, and I was never evacuated to the country as so many other London kids were. I felt that I was missing out on something at the time because it just seemed as though they were going on a long holiday. I do recall the V1 rockets or as they were commonly called '**the Doodlebugs**' these awful flying bombs were sent over in their thousands and my dad used to tell me that as long as you can still hear the motor going you were safe. When the motor stopped they glided on for a while on their short wings and nothing was to be heard until they hit the ground and they usually killed many people when they did.

Pam often tells a story about a V2 rocket bomb that almost killed her and her sister and an aunt when it fell in Cheshunt in Hertfordshire. They were on their way to visit the local cemetery, and a small boy was running in front of them at the time. His parents were walking just behind Pam's group. The couple who were walking behind received a direct hit when the bomb landed and they were never seen again. Pam and her Sister and her aunt were blown over in the blast but they were not seriously injured.

I had previously mentioned this incident on the Walthamstow Memories website and just recently I was contacted by a V-weapon researcher by the name of John Pridige who has now given us more precise details of the rocket incident.

Apparently there is an official war record that a V2 rocket impacted in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire on the afternoon of the 14th of January in 1945 and it actually came down in Bury Green Road which is adjacent to Cromwell Road. John tells us that the bomb crater was noted as being 'loam and sand' this allowed the rocket to penetrate slightly deeper than if it had hit a tarmac surface. We were informed by John that Pam undoubtedly owes her life to this fact. The official casualty figures are show as 3 dead, 21 seriously injured and 31 slightly injured.

This particular rocket was launched by Battery 1/485 from the Den Haag area of the Netherlands.

I am now thinking that this story would have never been written, and none of my family who are now reading it would be here today if Pam had been killed by the same bomb.

The Germans launched these massive V2 rockets for a while until March the 27th 1945. These were very destructive bombs much larger than the V1 flying bombs.

One could say that these awful things were the beginning of the space race after the war and the comedian Bob Hope once made a joke that America would always be ahead of the Russians in the space race, because they had captured the better Germans and these were the scientists who were responsible for rocket development after the war had ended.

Another horrid device that the Germans dropped in their thousands were called '**incendiary bombs**' and these were designed to hit the roof of a house and then set the house on fire and thus kill the occupants. Sometimes they would lodge in the roof and not explode and then they would have to be defused by the army.

Chapter 5

Fun and Games us kids used to play

In this present day and age if you were to hear someone in your front garden after dark you would be quite right to be alarmed, because you might think that you were experiencing a home invasion or a break in attempt. But when I was about ten years old we would think it quite normal to play '**hide and seek**' in the summer evenings and go and hide behind a neighbour's privet hedge in their front garden.

Another great pass time for us kids was '**knock down ginger**' (I never knew why it was named that) and we would take some cotton and carefully tie the door knockers of two houses on opposite sides of the road together and then knock on one and run and hide. When that person came to answer the knock as they opened the door it would knock on the opposite door. It was all good clean harmless fun, or so we thought at the time.

At that time **Graffiti** had not been invented (apart from '**Kilroy was here**' during the war) but I suppose we were still vandals in a minor sort of way.

By the way Kilroy was said to be an American soldier who went all over Europe in the war and he left his insignia on many walls and tanks etc. Actually I think the habit was perpetuated later on by his mates. And thus graffiti was born.

The things that please children seem to come and go in phases like marbles and yoyo's etc. and one thing we all got interested in at that time was scooters, now in those days we made our own scooters out of some pieces of wooden board and some old ball bearings begged from a garage and they became very noisy wheels. We traveled far and wide on those scooters and we never harmed anyone as far as I know.

The Mecca for us kids on a Saturday would be the Saturday morning pictures and we used to get in at the Dominion or the Granada Cinema for sixpence and for that we could see a cartoon and a cowboy film or maybe a Flash Gordon film and it kept us away from the parents for a few hours.

The Granada cinema was located in Hoe Street and the Dominion cinema was in Buxton Road which was in a street off '**the High Street**' which as we are all aware was the longest street market in the whole of London. But maybe Petticoat Lane is close to that claim too.

A correspondent of mine named Bill Bayliss has done considerable research into the Saturday Morning Pictures and he has given a link to those days: http://www.andmas.co.uk/the_pictures/saturdays/saturdays_1.htm

The kids who went to the Granada in Hoe Street were called 'the Grenadiers' and the ones who went to the Dominion were called 'The ABC Minors'.

The High Street was a fascinating place that was full of moveable stalls or barrows that would be wheeled there in the mornings by coster mongers, who would spend market days selling their wares to the thrifty house wives. In those days you could buy everything from fruit and vegetables to spectacles.

Today it is still there but the atmosphere is totally different and one would be lucky to see a white Anglo Saxon stall holder in the street.

Several years ago when we went for a holiday to the United Kingdom I was taken there by a friend on a nostalgic visit, and at the time I had a cap on my head that bore the one word '**Perth**'. A man came up to me and introduced himself and he told me that he had come from a place called 'Kambalda' which is about 600km from Perth. I thought at the time that it is indeed a very small world.

As a lad I could never afford the jellied eels that were being sold at '**Manzies Pie and Eel**' shop and to be honest after watching them killed and cut into pieces I did not fancy them anyway, but I often had a meat pie and green liquor there and sometimes a fruit pie to follow for afters. The floor was always covered in a layer of sawdust and I suspect that was there to soak up the spillages.

Just outside the shop there was a stall where a man was always busy selling live eels, actually they were alive when you picked one out, but it was very quickly dead when the man started to cut it up for you. I shall never know what they did with them at home.

When I reached the age of 11 years I became a student at **Markhouse Secondary Modern School**. I never sat for the

examination called the '**11 plus**' because my dad told me not to worry about it.

Had I not taken his advice, my life may have turned out a lot different to the way it has. However, I shall not dwell upon that subject. Suffice to say that there were better schools in the Walthamstow district than the one I was sent to but I never had the opportunity to find out what they would have done for me.

It was a long time ago now, but I left Gamuel Road School and I joined the '**Markhouse Secondary Modern School**' (MSM) around 1948/9 so my memory is rather hazy about room numbers, but had the building not been demolished and turned into a housing estate I could have probably found my way around the school if it were still there. Especially the location of the iron spiral staircase, that went between the ground floor, and the first floor. This was a 'no go' area for students, unless permission was given to use it by a teacher.

I was always in Lowhall House which was yellow in colour and I was voted to be a prefect after a year. However, that was as high as I could get in the ranks.

I may have already mentioned the ink wells and the stuff called Acetylene that we put into them so that they frothed and bubbled over, but one other thing that I recall was the really bad smelling urinals, and the occasion when I got the cane for throwing a pen at the wooden classroom ceiling, and I know now of course how stupid that was.

There was not one blade of grass around that school and when we had a sports afternoon or a football afternoon we would leave the school via the rear entrance and walk in formation down to the James Street Park or the Lowhall Sports Ground. After the sports session we were free to go home by ourselves or where ever we wanted to go.

This was another park where the keeper had his little hut and had tea parties with his cronies. After the war there was also a gun post in the middle of one of the playing fields for a long time before it was filled in.

One of the Science teachers at that time was Mr. Pearce and he was a sinister looking bald little man who used to strike terror into us lads at times. Another science teacher was Mr. Berg who taught us how to make soap and I used to wonder why that was. Maybe we smelled bad too. He also made thermometers with us and other things like that.

I really did enjoy going to that school and I mean it when I say that those schooldays were the best days of my life up to that time. The teachers we had there were excellent, and dedicated to teaching us awful urchins how to conduct ourselves in the grown up world that lay ahead.

I remember Miss Townsend and Miss Paddock who was a P.T. teacher for the girls, and a physical education teacher named Mr. Muddiman, who one day even invited the whole class to his home in Highams Park for afternoon tea. I was informed that Mr. Muddiman died from a heart attack which is strange because he was so fit and he spent most of his working day in a track suit.

Miss Townsend was into amateur dramatics, and once she bribed the whole class to join her at a theatre production in Chingford that she was involved in. Our job was to act as ushers and hand out brochures to the customers.

Most of the teachers at MSM lived in either Chingford or Highams Park because these were better areas than Walthamstow at the time. When I come to think of it anywhere would have been a better area than Walthamstow, but they commuted and came to teach us and for that I am grateful.

The Head master was Mr. Easton who was a very fair man who only had to give me the cane once for a misdemeanor (the pen incident). He later tried very hard to get me a job when it was time for me to leave school. He had a son who was nowhere near as clever as his father and I sat next to him in an evening class a few years later.

Personally I chose to be streamed into a group that would study commercial subjects which included 'book keeping (accounting) and Pitman's shorthand and typing. As my life eventuated I realized that I had made the wrong decision as I shall explain later. In hindsight I really do wish that I had paid more attention to the QWERTY keyboard lessons which were done to music, because I still cannot 'touch type' and I use several fingers to produce what I am doing now.

We also had practical lessons too, such as metal work and wood work classes, Mr. Parrott was the metal work teacher and in metal work we made many pokers and copper fruit bowls and stuff like that. All of these were quite useless items really but we did learn how to use machinery such as lathes and drills etc. and these skills were often used later in my working life as an apprentice.

In the woodwork lessons the teacher was Mr. Fairfoull and in his class we would make things like egg racks and bookcases etc. and I had an accident in one lesson when I was using a Jack plane and I removed the top layer of skin on a finger on my left hand and I still have the scar to prove it.

Miss Hall who was Mr. Easton's secretary at the time rushed me down to the nearest Doctor's surgery which happened to be Dr. Juhn's in Markhouse Road. He fixed me up and I returned to school.

Miss Hall was not a relation by the way, and she was a pretty lady as thin as a rake but very nice.

Dr. Juhn was also the Orthodox Jewish doctor who attended to the family problems when they arose and his greeting was always "**Hello my darlink, how are you?**"

Another one of Mr. Fairfoull's attributes was that in his youth he had been a very good competitive swimmer, and so he became our swimming teacher and mentor. Once a week the class would walk in formation (we call it a crocodile in Australia) from the school in Markhouse Road to the swimming baths in The High Street, this would have been several kilometres but as there were no school buses in those days, we did it the hard way, and of course it was good exercise too.

We didn't really have a proper bathroom at home, apart from the one in the scullery that had to be filled and emptied with a bucket, so when I was older and I discovered girls I used to go to the same Walthamstow Baths in the High Street, but I went there so that I could use what was termed as a '**slipper bath**', I don't know why they were called that but maybe people slipped over from time to time. Maybe not.

I used to go there once a week usually on a Saturday **whether I needed a bath or not. That is an old joke often aimed at poms by Australian people.**

Later on I decided that the slipper baths at the Leyton complex were far better as they were much newer so I used to go there instead. If

you tipped the attendant there you would get extra soap and maybe another towel too. And of course when you yelled out '**more hot water in number 10**' your needs were quickly attended to.

However, I have digressed, so back to the school trips to the swimming baths. I did learn how to swim there and once I even got a certificate for swimming the width of the baths, but I was never going to be a successful swimming champion that was quite obvious.

These times were in the days of guys like Denis Crompton, who was a good Cricket player and he used to advertise a men's hair product called Brylcreem, and their slogan was '**Brylcreem a little dab will do you**' and as it happened there was a vending machine in the vestibule where you could put a few pence into a slot and get a dab of Brylcreem out.

As lads do, we found that by putting ones mouth over the nozzle it was possible to actually suck out enough of the product to smarten ones hair for the trip home. Of course if you tried that today you would probably get a far different product come out of the dispenser.

When the swimming lesson had finished it was always the last lesson of the day, and after that we were dismissed and we made our own way home.

Immediately outside the swimming pool entrance there was a subterranean toilet block and there was a ventilation grill in the pavement next to a telephone box.

Now one of my mates noticed that people had dropped some money accidentally down this grill so we regularly set out to retrieve it with some chewing gum on the end of a stick.

This was quite successful actually and we often found enough coins to buy some buns from the Bakers in The High Street.

One day we looked down there, and we saw a leather brief case that had somehow been secreted there by a thief we suspect. We went down and informed the attendant but we didn't get to hear anymore about it.

If that had happened today the area would have been cleared and the bomb squad would have been called to blow it up.

Because we were a poor family I was given the chance of going to a 'school camp' at a place called Horsham in Sussex. We were allowed to go there for a month once a year and for me it was always a character building experience and I enjoyed the country life and freedom immensely.

We lived in dormitory type huts that were built during the war for army servicemen to live in, so we all had a bed and there was a room in each block where the teacher slept. We ate in a canteen and our days were spent either walking to nearby villages for art lessons or dancing with the girls and I hated that. I don't think we had any formal lessons like the three R's all the time we were there.

On one of the Sundays they took us by bus to a seaside resort for the day and on another Sunday they had a parent's day and they provided buses so that our mums and dads could come and see what we got up to whilst we were there.

Our son Jeremy now lives near Brighton in a village called '**Hassocks**' with his family, but when they first moved back to the

United Kingdom they lived in Brighton. That town has changed so much in the last 50 years and I used to ride down there with my cycling friends for the day, we would leave the London area around midnight and arrive in time for breakfast.

The Pavilion is still there, but it is like a mini London now and very busy with university students taking up all of the rental accommodation. It is also said to be the '**Gay capital of Britain**', but I could not say if that is true or not.

One day soon after I had returned to school after having had my month away at the school camp I was summoned to Mr. Easton's office at MSM School. He asked me if I wanted to study '**commercial or practical**' subjects for my future career.

I wonder how many kids chose the wrong path to go down as I did, as I explained previously I chose Commercial and it was a great big mistake for me.

We had such a varied life whilst at MSM School and we were treated to several field trips or outings when we were approaching the time when we would leave school and look for a job.

I remember field trips to Yardley's the perfume factory and Everready Batteries and to Fords of Dagenham and at each venue we were shown around the factories and then treated to a nice afternoon tea and they left me with some great memories.

Chapter 6

Joining the workforce

From my experiences with my own children it appears that parents of today have to drive their children everywhere and they actually demand it too. But when I was in my teens and still at school, during the holidays we used to get to places like the Hollow Pond and Eagle Pond (Bottomless so they say) either on our scooters or roller skates or even just walking and running with our fishing rods. Strange as it may seem but I didn't use a bicycle very much when I was a young boy. Maybe I didn't have one for a long time.

Mind you our fishing rods in those days were always ex army tank aerals that were telescopic and thus quite portable. Also we could get to Highams Park Lakes by getting on a steam train from St. James Street station.

The things we used to get up too on those journeys are not printable here but as the old saying states '**boys will be boys**' however, one mate who I shall not name was not above having a pee out of the train window as it was moving along. Of course the carriages were not the corridor type.

When I left school my second job was at a company called **E.N. BRAY Ltd.** Who at that time was an old established manufacturer of electrical switchgear for marine and commercial applications. They were located in Wood Street at '**Whipps Cross, Walthamstow**', and one winter it was so cold that The Hollow Pond was frozen over and some of the workers went skating on it during the lunch breaks.

You may recall that whilst at school I had chosen to study commercial subjects and I at first attempted to get a job with a legal firm where the principal was a man named Sir Kenneth Swan Q.C. which I failed to get, that was probably because my dad thought the correct interview attire for me was blue football shorts and blanched white plimsols. He really didn't have a clue, I am sorry to say.

However, I did get a job with another firm called '**The Oppenheimer Pipe Company**' and once again my secretarial or commercial studies proved to be useless, because I worked in an office where I dealt with the repairs of things like Meersham pipes (Sherlock Holmes used one of those) and elaborate cigarette lighters of art deco designs. Of course at this time smoking was an accepted social pass time unlike today when a smoker is shunned most of the time and treated like a social misfit.

After six months of travelling by train from St. James Street, station to Liverpool Street and then hiking to Finsbury Square to start work, and eating with food vouchers etc. I decided that this job was not for me, so I resigned because I saw an advert in the Walthamstow Guardian for '**Apprentices required**' at E. N. Brays and so after being interviewed for the position I started work there.

I shall tell you more about my '**interview**' and work at E. N. Brays later on in this story when my answer to the only interview question got me the job.

Who remembers the era of the '**Teddy Boys**' in Walthamstow? They were an unruly mob and there were often brawls in and around The High street between the various gangs at that time.

These smartly dressed (so they thought) louts with velvet coat collars would hang around the High Street with their 'Tony Curtis' type haircuts slicked down with Brylcreem and they would terrorise anyone who confronted them.

Fortunately I was not involved but I did get asked once 'what are you looking at' and that usually started another fight with bicycle chains as weapons but I don't think knives were used, that came later on.

I have already told you about the accident that occurred when my foot went into the rear wheel of my parent's tandem, well something else has just come to my mind about that incident.

The accident was when my foot went into the tandem wheel and almost tore my foot off, and as a result of that I was forced to wear lace up boots instead of shoes, and that is because boots gave the weakened ankle more support.

For a while I was moved around in a wheelchair that my parents had borrowed from the nuns Convent that was situated somewhere near St. Saviors Church in Markhouse Road.

The kind and thoughtful nuns thought that my leg would heal much quicker if my dad accepted a crucifix as a gift and they asked him to locate it above my bed on the wall.

The crucifix was constructed in such a way that it had a back that was made from cardboard, so it was actually hollow and one night as I laid

in my bed I looked up at the crucifix on the wall and lo and behold a small army of bed bugs emerged from it and started marching down the wall towards me.

Needless to say, that both the wheelchair and the crucifix were returned to the convent the very next day.

I was never very religious as a child but at that time we had a regular school lesson period known as R.I. or religious instruction, and as I also attended Sunday school I grew up to be what might be loosely described as a Christian thinking person.

Many of us under privileged children in my area owed a great deal to the owners of two florists shops that were located in The High Street area. One of these was Mr. Stevens who had a shop close to '**Willow Walk**'. He must have spent many thousands of pounds on us kids in his mission hall that was located in Markhouse Road.

As well as the Sunday school lessons they also had handicraft evenings where we could stay off the streets and make things.

When I was quite young I had a cousin (sort of) named Heather Dodd who was killed by a runaway Post Office van that rolled down Church Hill (off Hoe Street) when the driver forgot to apply the hand brake.

At that time the Stevens family was a tower of strength to my aunt who never really recovered from her loss.

My years at Markhouse Road school were very character building years and as the old saying goes 'you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink' well I enjoyed my school years and I learned a great deal from my teachers who did a good job in my opinion.

I really do wish that I could go to a reunion one day but having been in touch with the website www.friendsreunited.uk I think most of my old school mates have now passed away.

Chapter 7

How many degrees are there in a circle?

I shall now recap upon what I have already told you about my entry into the workforce at the age of 15 years, which was around 1952 when I departed from Markhouse Road Secondary Modern School.

Sorry but I shall have to repeat myself here; you will recall that I started work at the Oppenhiemer Pipe Company in Finsbury Square in London. My job was to work as a junior in the repairs department and every day I was confronted with broken tobacco pipes and cigarette lighters. It was such a boring job and the journey in a suit by train every day was an ordeal, as I would much rather have been riding my bike.

And so six months later when I saw an advertisement in the '**Walthamstow Guardian**' for electrical apprentices with '**E.N. Bray Ltd.**' this was an Electrical engineering company located at Whipps Cross, I at once applied for the job. They had never had an apprentice before and they actually asked for two lads or lassies to fill the positions.

I made an appointment and I was interviewed by Mr. Chalmers who was the works manager at the company who I estimated would have been about 50 years of age. But actually he looked about 90 to me as I was still only 15 years old.

I learned later that his nickname behind his back was '**wing nut**' because he had a huge pair of ears that stuck out and his neck had lines that looked like a metal thread.

The interview was conducted in the workshop office which was in an elevated position; with windows all around it so that Mr. Chalmers could look out across the factory floor, and thus see if any workers were not working.

After a few introductory exchanges Mr. Chalmers asked me the one and only question that would either get me the job or send me away with my tail between my legs.

He looked me straight in the eye and asked me "**how many degrees are there in a circle**"? I at once replied "three hundred and sixty sir" and so the job was mine.

And so the very next week I started working at E.N. Bray Ltd. as an apprentice after first giving in my notice of leaving to the people at the Oppenhiemer Pipe Company, they were not amused but I didn't really care as I was free from the London daily rat race at last.

Being an apprentice is not an easy job and of course I was subjected to all of the usual tricks that the older employees like to play on the young guys. Tricks like being sent to the stores to ask for a '**long weight**' (wait) and stuff like that.

I recall that one day a workmate of mine had managed to get two tins of paint from the paint shop that he exchanged for a packet of cigarettes, all very illegal of course. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall when he arrived home, because when he was not

there, one of the guys had mixed his paint so that it was actually two tins of grey paint.

I admired him because he never gave them the satisfaction of having a laugh at his expense, because he never said a word about it.

On another occasion my mate and mentor Jim Wakerley had purloined some metal rods for a job that he was doing at home, and he asked me if I would help him to get them off the premises illegally of course.

We did this by putting them down our right trouser legs, and as we both were wearing a bib and brace overall this was just a bit uncomfortable when we walked out with pronounced limps.

We then with great difficulty got on our bikes and pushed off into the road, and as we rode, or rather freewheeled past the bus stop with one leg stuck out to the side, we noticed the stores manager Mr. Jack Fry standing there waiting for a bus. Luckily for us we got away with it.

I had thought that my education had been completed at Markhouse Road School but actually it was far from completed and the next five years were a half decade of pure joy as I worked in one department after another, within the company.

At the same time I was attending the '**South West Essex Technical College**' on a one day a week basis, where I was enrolled in an engineering course with my fellow apprentice whose name was John Niall.

However, my real education was delivered at the workplace by my workmates, some of whom were Fred Phillips, Arthur and Jim

Wakerley, Charlie Manning, Dennis Cooper and a lot more who are too numerous to mention. It was like working with ones own family and they were a great bunch of people.

The buildings that E. N. Bray Ltd. occupied at Whipps Cross had been there for many years, and at one time they were used as a film studio for none other than **'Mr. Alfred Hitchcock'** who specialized in suspense and horror movies one of which was called 'Psycho'.

Set aside from the main factory was an area simply known as **'the house'** which was because that is what it was at one time. The downstairs was like an annex to the factory with work benches and machinery etc. but the upstairs still had a functioning bathroom, and it was quite common for an employee to turn up in his 'boiler suit' for work in the morning, and leave later in the day 'done up like a dogs dinner' because he had a date that evening.

Dotted around the factory were several huge coal stoves and the sides of these would be red hot at times and sandwiches would be toasted with a factory made toasting fork. One of my every day tasks would be to run down to the local café for a jug of very strong Billy tea.

The shop foreman's name was Mr. Ernie Willis who was a very small man with a stooped back who always wore a khaki coat. He also had a small raised up office where he could look down on the workers. Ernie would also sharpen drills and dole out bonus cards to his workers. The bonus system enabled us to make some extra money if we could get the job allocated to us done in a record time.

He was also the custodian of the toilet key and if we wanted to go to the toilet we would have to sign a book and take the key. If you were

outside for too long there would be a 'hue and a cry' until you returned the key.

The toilet cleaner was a character who was also named Ernie and one day he was telling me how well he looked after his cleaning tools. He kept a very straight face as he informed me that he had been using the same sweeping broom for 20 years. He then told me that in that time it had been fitted with 3 new handles and 5 new broom heads.

After about four years I was allowed to work in the '**Electrical test bench**' department and whilst in this exalted position I was allowed to use the executive toilet that was reserved for the older and more respected members of the staff, for this trust I felt truly honoured.

When I had been working at the company for about four years the company managers announced that the business was expanding and they needed to relocate to larger premises that would be situated in Britannia Road in Waltham Cross in Hertfordshire. The company also announced a change of name to **ENBRAY Pty. Ltd.**

Of course this change did not meet with the approval of many of the long time employees, some of which had been there as man and boy, who did not want to commute that far every day. There were pay outs and early retirements but the majority of the employees decided to stay with the company, and some of them even bought homes in the Cheshunt and Waltham Cross areas, and others began the daily commute to work in a fleet of old double decked buses that were repainted dark blue.

As I was an apprentice I had to stay with the company, but as I was a keen racing cyclist I used to ride my bike every day from Markhouse Road to Britannia Road in Waltham Cross. This was very good training for me and I managed the ride whatever the weather threw at me, though it was not much fun during the winter.

Many of these trips were made in the company of my friend Ray Algar who was a member of my cycling club at the time. Ray now lives in the Channel Islands and he emails me now and again.

Life was good for me at the time despite the changes to the company when they were taken over by a much larger company and of course I was still doing my apprenticeship.

Every year the workers enjoyed what was called '**the Christmas draw**' and we paid all the year long weekly contributions for shares in the draw, sometimes I was lucky and other years I won nothing. In a good year you could go home laden with poultry and bottles of spirits etc. if you were lucky.

The event was something that we looked forward to all year long, but it could be an awful anti climax if you went home empty handed.

I mentioned that I enjoyed riding and racing on a bicycle, well later on in this story I have actually written a chapter on the bicycle racing scene as it was in the 1950's but I have to give you a brief insight into what got me started on a hobby that I have kept up for about 60 years so far. I first joined a cycling club called '**The Green Rose Cycling Club**' and I did lots of long and interesting rides with this club for a while. But after a while I began to think it would be good to compete in races and so I joined another club that was prominent at that time

in Walthamstow and that was called '**The Shamrock Cycling Club**' and they had headquarters in Saint Barnabas's church and meetings once a week and races on Sunday Mornings.

After a while I began mixing with other cyclists who preferred racing in groups i.e. massed start races and I was invited to join a very successful club known as '**The Marsh Racing Club**' now this club had started at the Marsh Street Youth Centre in Walthamstow.

I stayed with this club until it disbanded around the same time that we emigrated to Australia.

I raced at Dunmow Aerodrome and another place called Stapleford Tawney Aerodrome where I won a race that was one of the largest fields I have seen. Also there were races every week organized by different clubs right through the year.

At the end of the year clubs would organize 'hill climb' races and ours were usually up Claypits Hill in High Beech and another two were up Mott Street and Lippits Hill and they are also in the High Beech district.

The National Championship Hill Climb is held annually on various 'hills' around the United Kingdom and on one occasion a few of us decided to travel up to 'Winnats Pass' in Yorkshire to watch the event. It was a very social event and we slept in the vans when we arrived early in the morning. I have never seen a hill like that before and it was the steepest piece of road I have ever seen in my life. It had gradients of 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 all the way up. The guys who ride these events must be part mountain goat I thought at the time. They are a special kind of rider who specializes in riding up such terrain. I couldn't do it anyway as I am just too heavy.

Every year the Marsh Racing Club has a reunion and the numbers are dwindling every year. I have never been to one as I am too far away in Australia.

In the 1950's the cycling clubs in the London area were enjoying a very healthy membership era, and cycling was very popular as a way of keeping fit and also it was a very social sport.

My club would have organized club runs every weekend, and the cafes along the A11 road in places such as Sawbridgeworth and Epping would be full of cyclists enjoying 'elevenses' tea breaks or lunch. Sometimes as many as a hundred bikes would be stacked up against a fence, and in those days nobody was worried about the possibility of having one stolen.

Also in the Stansted area there were a number of large dormitory style huts that were owned and run by several London based cycling clubs. This was because one of the best time trial courses was on the A11 and it started at the 32nd milestone near Ugley. The course was known as the E1 course. So some clubs would ride up to the hut and race there on Saturday or Sunday mornings.

The '**social**' season would commence after the hill climb season and most clubs would have a club dinner and dance and prize ceremony. This would be when the club champions would be given their trophies that they had raced all through the year for.

There was also a national competition to find the best cyclist of the year and this was called the British Best all Rounder competition or

the BBAR, I went to this concert once when it was held at the Royal Albert Hall and it was packed out.

One year when I was around nineteen a few of my friends and I decided to attend a club dinner and dance in Skegness on the East coast, this was put on by the Skegness wheelers. There were two couples and four of us single guys who set out on the ride. Now at the best of times this would have been a hard ride from Walthamstow to Skegness as it is well over a hundred miles.

But this was in the winter time and snow was forecast for the weekend. We stayed over night in Cambridge at a bed and breakfast house that we had booked ahead. I can still recall that the owners were a Jewish couple and when they offered us a drink I thought that a whisky would be a nice warm up drink. But the man asked would we like "tea or water" which was a great disappointment.

The next morning we set off for the final part of the trip in a blizzard and when we got to Skegness we were all frozen. We stayed at the hotel where the Skegness Wheelers were holding their dinner and dance etc. and when I got into the bath my feet were so cold that I shrieked with the pain as they began to unfreeze.

I must have been very naïve at the time because I just couldn't understand why one young unmarried couple who were with us who shall be nameless did not come down to dinner and they stayed in their room all night. Goodness only knows what they must have got up to. The ride home to Walthamstow the next day was accomplished in one day and the next morning which was a Monday I had a hard time getting to work after such a hard weekend.

I used to do so many miles on my bike in those days that I was a very fit young man, and every Easter a group of us would go on a four day get fit ride to Cornwall and we stayed at B & B houses all the time. In

those good old days you could get a B & B for the night including a good breakfast for ten shillings and for half a crown you could get an evening meal too. Sadly those days are long gone now.

And then there were the European tours that a group of us would go on before the racing season so that we would get fit for the year to come. I remember going to Switzerland and the South of France and Holland and Belgium. It was good experience to ride over some of the mountains that the Tour de France riders climb every year in half the time that we were taking. But we did have saddlebags etc. and that is our excuse.

All these rides were done on a shoe string budget by staying at hostels or cheap B & B houses.

Of course all of those wonderful days of freedom came to an end when I met and married Pam, but one has to grow up eventually. And I still have my memories that I am sharing with you all now.

Chapter 8

Finding my life partner

During the final year of my apprenticeship I commenced working in the company '**drawing office**' and that is where the design work was done for the company's switchboards and motor control systems was done. And it so happened that this last job position would actually dictate to me just what I would end up doing for the remainder of my working life.

After I had qualified as an '**electrical design draftsman**' I was allowed to stay on in the drawing office, and I continued to work there for another five years, designing electrical switch gear cabinets for industrial equipment for projects all over the United Kingdom. I was quite contented until I realized that I was now 22 years of age and I had not had a girl friend or a good relationship with a member of the opposite sex.

Up until that time I was still living at home in Markhouse Road with my parents and my only pursuits were bicycle racing and training with my club mates and studying for my engineering certificate which was very time consuming, and the occasional visit to the Wood Green Jazz club with my cycling friends.

Of course there were some very attractive girls in the company offices, and also on the shop floor wiring department there was a bevy of beauty that I would fantasize about most of the time and I was attracted to them, but none attracted me as much as the young

girl named '**Pamela Clark**' who would come walking through the factory from time to time delivering some papers etc. to the shop foremen.

Pam was a local girl and she had joined the company as a Dictaphone typist when they moved to Waltham Cross.

Poor Pam was so embarrassed when she came down to our level on the workshop floor, because her trip would be hastened along by all the wolf whistles that emanated from the randy workers, at that time the term sexual harassment had not been invented and it certainly was not a crime to lust after someone as lovely as Pam.

And so I started to leave my sandwiches at home and eat a cooked lunch in the staff canteen, just so that I could catch a glimpse of this beautiful young typist as she was in those days.

This longing from afar went on for several months and all of this time I was being urged along by two of my office mates named Brian Cook and Dennis Cooper, who insisted that I should make my feelings known to her.

Possibly you can understand my frustration and feelings for this girl and I was really suffering I can tell you, and then one day I left the bike shed at the same time as Pam who also used to ride her bike to work, and somehow I managed to ride alongside her down Britannia Road chattering away with small talk.

At the end of the road I could have turned right towards Waltham Cross as I usually did and just chickened out again, but Pam turned

left towards the short hill that went over the railway bridge because she lived in Cheshunt.

And so making a snap decision I turned left too and caught her up and then I was able to give her a push up the hill.

And so finally plucking up my courage I asked Pam for a date and that coming Saturday we went up to London in the Ford Van, and we saw the film '**South Pacific**' as it was showing at the Odeon cinema there in The Tottenham Court Road.

The rest is now history, because Pam is now 73 (born 1938) and I am 74 (born 1937) and now Pam does the pushing as she rides behind me on our tandem as we ride around Perth. We often hear the calls of "**she is not pushing**" or the old song "**Daisy, Daisy**" But I just smile as I remember this story.

Dennis Cooper by the way was my best man when Pam and I were married and that was a duty that he rightly deserved, as I don't think I would be writing this as I would not have taken the plunge without all of the good advice that he gave to me at the time. Dennis is 82 years old now but we still write letters to each other every year, he now lives in Weymouth.

As we were unable to afford to buy a house at that time and as nothing was available to rent we decided to purchase a caravan and live in that. We purchased a 22 foot long caravan from a company in Waltham Cross and they allowed us to install it on a site that is still there today called '**The Breach Barns Caravan Site**' which is on the outskirts of Waltham Abbey.

This made the commuting to Enbrays quite good for me as it was only about 5km and I managed it on my bike on most days, but Pam had to go by bus and walking which was not quite so easy. At that time Pam did not have a driving license so she could not drive the Ford van.

However, after 10 months our first child '**Fenella Ann Hall**' was born in Epping Hospital on **June the 19th 1961** and Pam had stopped work a few months before that of course. Some people count the months when they see that our first child was born soon after we were married but I can assure you that it was all above board.

We actually spent three British winters living in that caravan and our second child '**Martin Leonard Hall**' was born in Thorpe Combe hospital in Walthamstow on **March the 29th 1963** also while we were still living like Gypsies in the caravan, of course the caravan never moved though.

The good part about caravan living was that there was not too much housework or gardening to be done due to the small area that we lived in; the actual space was approximately 22' x 8' and that was divided up so that was one third kitchen and two thirds living room and bedroom combined. The bed disappeared into the wall during the day time. The 'U' shaped lounge was big enough until Fenella arrived and then I constructed a cot that would sit on one side of the seats so that she could sleep near us. There were folding doors fitted so that her room could be shut off at night time.

The downsides to caravan living were that the toilets were about 100 metres away and going there in the middle of the night was no joke.

There were no shower blocks in those days and it was so cold in the winters. Also we did not have electricity connected to the caravan, our lighting and cooking was all done with bottled Calor gas. Normally in warmer weather we had a storage tank for drinking water and I filled this up with a hosepipe. The water was ejected into the sink etc. with a hand pump.

At times when it was winter we had to get water from the stand pipe outside the van by putting a rag soaked in Paraffin around it and setting fire to it so as to melt the ice. Also the Calor gas in our gas supply bottle would freeze too, so we had to try and keep it warm with cladding and a big box around it.

Another re-occurring problem was the double bed that was lifted up into the wall during the daytime, sometimes the cable that was connected to the huge counter weight spring would break and Pam would be left holding a 100kg bed in mid air.

We did actually have a coke burning fire in the caravan that kept the place warm during the coldest nights, but as the floor was made from thin plywood the cold came up from the ground. There would be a lot of condensation at night time from us I suppose, and that ran down the walls onto the red upholstery and caused all the patterns to run together.

We had lots of experiences whilst we were at the Caravan site and we did make some friends as everyone was in the same boat really. The rules were all in favour of the site owners in those days so one had to be very careful not to upset the management.

One day I was told by a friend that there was a rumour that a **'peeping Tom'** was active on the site, and one night not to long after that I was just getting ready for bed when I heard a really blood curdling scream, and it was coming from the caravan next door to ours.

I rushed outside and found the girl next door screaming and the **'peeping Tom'** saying how sorry he was and assuring her that he meant her no harm. At that point the girl's husband emerged from their caravan where he had been asleep.

Apparently the girl had gone over to the toilet block for a last minute visit, and upon her return she had gone to the coal bunker behind the caravan for some coal and she found this man looking through her rear window of the caravan.

When we called the police they came and took the villain away and the policeman said we should have given the idiot a good bashing at the time.

Actually he was bound over on a **'good behavior bond'** for a year and fined 5 pounds. And worse of all for him and his poor wife his caravan was towed off the site and left on the road. As he didn't have a car and nowhere to put his home he had real problems. I don't know what happened to him after that and I didn't really care.

Chapter 9

Buying our first house

All of the time we had spent living cheaply in the caravan had enabled us to put enough savings in the bank for a deposit on a house, and if we sold the caravan as well we could add that to our savings, and so we looked around and we decided to buy a house at **'140, Stortford Hall Park'** in **'Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire'** which is located on what was known as the A11 road in those days.

The house was a semi-detached 3 bedroom, one bathroom house on an estate being built by **'Sir Alfred Boyd Gibbons'** who at that time was a self made millionaire who was also a polo playing mate of **'Prince Philip'**.

I recall seeing him once wearing jodhpurs and driving his beautiful maroon coloured open topped Bentley car, and he stopped and helped one of his workers unload a brick truck and stack the bricks at the side of the road holding just two at a time. He was not afraid of getting his hands dirty and I respected him for that.

The estate was all brand new, and as people started to move in we made lots of new friends. Everyone was young as we were with young children and big mortgages so we quickly got to know everyone around us.

The big down side for me was that the house was 25 miles from Enbrays and every day I would do the round trip of 50 miles on my bike and during the winter months the roads were icy and life was rather hard at times.

I varied my routes and sometimes went via Harlow New Town and over Nazing Common and other times I went via Epping just for a change. Of course it did keep me quite fit. At this time we still had the old Ford van, but as we did not have much money we saved by not buying petrol. There was a rail service to Waltham Cross and I did use that on a few rare occasions.

Bishops Stortford and nearby Stansted Mountfitchet are very popular areas with cyclists and I shall tell you more about that later on as I have written a separate chapter all about the bicycle time trial scene in that era.

We did return to that first house at '**140 Stortford Hall Park**' a few years ago on a nostalgic visit and we even had some tea with a neighbour who still lived there. The garage door that I had made for the self built garage attached to the house was still there, and hopefully still working with the sash weight and bike chain counter balance system that I had designed and had built at Enbrays as a foreign order nearly 40 years ago.

Whilst we were standing there we were challenged by a woman who wanted to know why we were taking photographs of the house, but she was quite happy when we explained that we had been the first owners many years ago. It was this woman who informed us about the people across the road still living there.

This old couple who were actually the same age as us had really grown very old in the years since we had started our many moves. Terry used to be a robust Squash playing academic but now he was showing signs of Dementia and Pat who now has Parkinson's

disease was very frail and shaking all the time. Once again I thought that we had made the right move when we had emigrated to Australia.

The guys in the factory at Enbrays were very helpful back then and I had many things done for me like getting bike frames painted and caravan steps and an aquarium made etc. all for a few packets of cigarettes.

I did this bicycle commuting to Enbrays for a while and then one day when I had worked there as man and boy for 12 years the company employed a new drawing office manager named Mr. Pugh, he insisted on being called by his full name during working hours, but he told us to call him Arthur outside the office, well Arthur was a huge man who was very overweight and he had a difficult job to do as he was full of new ideas, and he wanted to bring the drawing office up to date with modern technology. There were no computers in those days but there were still improvements to be made.

One day when we were inundated with too much work Arthur announced that he was going to employ some '**contract draftsmen**' to ease the load for a while, now that was a term I knew nothing about but my eyes were suddenly opened up when these two smart young guys arrived for work driving rather new and posh looking cars whilst I was still riding my bike to work.

The reason was that as they were on short term free lance contracts they were paid heaps more money than us staff guys were.

As it happened at that time I had a cycling mate named Del Conner who was also a contract draftsman, but I didn't know that and when he told me that there was a vacancy at '**Cossors**' factory in Harlow for a contract draftsman I immediately 'jumped ship' after 12 years work.

Of course there were objections but I wanted a change of pace as being at the same place all that time was boring.

And so I began working on short term contract jobs around Essex and Hertfordshire for about a third more money than I had earned before.

I worked in Stevenage for the British Aircraft Company on the development of an anti tank missile, and in Chelmsford and Harlow and also in Cambridge where I worked for Pye TVT until we emigrated to Australia. And all of these places I got to by riding my bike as I was still keeping racing fit that way.

After a while we had another increase in the family when Jeremy was born in the house at **140, Stortford Hall Park** and now he is writing books I hope there will be a plaque on the wall one day stating '**Jeremy Hall the famous author was born here in 1966 on April the 13th**'

Jeremy was the only child we had who was born in our own house, and it was quite an event at the time, when I called for the doctor the lazy blighter just said the midwife will be able to handle everything so don't worry.

Fenella was born in Epping Hospital on **June the 19th in 1961** and Martin was born in Thorpe Combe Hospital in Walthamstow on **March the 29th in 1963**.

I shall tell you all a lot more about my children in my 'Dynasty chapter' later on in the story.

Richard who is our youngest son was born in Sydney in Australia in Hornsby Hospital on December the 17th in 1971 but I shall come back to him later.

Chapter 10

Be it ever so humble there is no place like home

I have decided to explain a bit more about my old home at '**101 Markhouse Road**' because unless you had actually lived there you would not really know what I endured.

This story is a work in progress after all so I may wander a bit and repeat myself and I think that I have said before too. No worries.

Once again I have been strolling down memory lane and the lane this time is in fact **Markhouse Road** and **Bett's Mews** which is the alleyway that I used to go along to get to my home.

If you are getting bored with this I am so sorry but I am getting it all down on paper so that my family can read it but everyone is welcome to have a look in too.

I lived at that address from about 1940 as a very young boy until 1960 when I got married to Pamela my wife.

The address was 101, Markhouse Road, E17 and when I lived there it was a slum and about 15 years ago when we were on holiday in the United Kingdom I got some friends to take us there and it was exactly the same, with a few additions and the alley was named Bett's Mews. I wonder if they all still use the same WC. I would imagine they have

one of those that you squat on now as the area is almost 100% Muslim occupied.

All sorts of nasty happenings went on down that alleyway under the cover of darkness, and I often used to find the evidence in the mornings but I don't ever recall anyone being murdered there during my occupancy. I wonder who Bett was and why they named the alley after him because it never had a name when I lived there.

When you entered the property via one of the many gates when I lived there you were confronted by my dad's home made lean to shed, that served to house all of our bikes and the tandem, and the work bench and all of his tools accumulated over the past years. When he was taken short it often doubled as a urinal too.

Just like my dad did, today I have a good collection of tools, but mine are kept in my garage and the shed is home to the lawn mower and other gardening tools. Actually my spanner collection has mostly been obtained by courtesy of the motorists who have dropped them from the cars, and I have then found them on one of my bike rides.

My dad was a generous man and he was good friends with the insurance man who visited us regularly for our premiums, and he used to let him leave his bicycle in our garden when he had finished his collection round for the day. He would then get into his little car and go home for the night, probably to a posh house in Chingford or Higham's Park. Once when my dad wanted to insure the contents of the flat this insurance man wrote down that the residence was semi-detached. Now that was the product of his very fertile imagination at the time I think.

I remember that one day a huge grey slate came off the roof and embedded itself into ground just where he left his bicycle for the night. He almost had to make a claim on his own policy I think that night.

When I was a boy we had a little dog named Mickey, and when I was about 11 years old he was hit by a car in Markhouse Road and killed, and I remember that a woman who was a neighbour from Ringwood Road came up to the school and delivered the news to me through the school railings during a lesson break. At the time I was heartbroken because we all loved Mickey, he was only a bitsa but he was a nice little dog.

We didn't get another dog for a few years and then my dad came home with a mongrel dog named Duke, and I think he was with them for few years. I can't remember when he died but it was my job to walk him after school every day.

My dad stayed in that place for several years after I left the nest and we had emigrated to Australia and lived in Sydney for a year when my mum passed away, and he eventually got a ground floor flat in a high rise block near Longfellow Road. They never ever owned their own home and that was normal in that era. I couldn't wait until the day that Pam and I would be free of a mortgage but it wasn't until we were about 50 years old.

Since moving to Australia in 1970 we have lived in Melbourne in the state of Victoria, and then Sydney in New South Wales, and finally in Perth in Western Australia.

You could label us as '**nomads**' as we have had many houses over here and some we have rented and several we have bought and two we have built from the ground up. And as you already know we had a caravan and two houses in the United Kingdom plus rentals.

Our present house is in a rural district North East of Perth and it has a $\frac{1}{4}$ acre block and it is what **you** would call a bungalow, over here it is just called a **single storey house**. It is big enough for us at present but when we get a bit older I suppose we shall try and down size to something more manageable.

Chapter 11

Ten pound poms

When we had lived in the house in Bishops Stortford for a few years we found that we had 'itchy feet' and we began to look around for somewhere bigger and better to live and raise the family.

After a while we found a house in '**Church Road, Stanstead Mountfitchet**' or just Stansted as it is called today, this where London's 3rd airport is now situated.

We moved to the house just known as '**Oakdene**' in **Church Road, Stansted** (as far as we know it didn't have a street number) around 1968 and we thought at the time that it was a beautiful old house set in a third of an acre and completely detached. The house did originally have a large Oak tree in the garden which was on a slope, hence the name Oakdene but after a while it became obvious that the tree was threatening the house if it ever came down so we made a deal with a Tree feller who cut it down and he took the wood away and so everyone was happy.

As it was fairly old there were a few problems that had to be overcome like connecting the house to the main sewerage system, because as it stood it at the moment it only had a sort of sewerage cess pit that had to be emptied now and again. As there was a council estate located behind our house we knew that if we could find enough money we could get the sewerage in the house connected to the housing estate sewerage system.

There were also two wells on the property and although they were full of nice clean water, Pam would not let me rest until I had completely filled them both with builder's rubble. She was terrified that if the children fell into one of the wells they would drown. Especially as one was made from glazed bricks and it was built like a large bottle.

It also had an old kitchen that needed renewing, so we did that with some flat pack kitchen cabinets, The sort of thing that IKEA sell today, and we also removed the 'arrow slit' windows and put some iron lintels in the walls and put picture windows in their places.

This was all quite adventurous stuff for us but we managed it quite well even though we had to get a professional plasterer to finish of the walls for us. While this was being done I shipped Pam and the children off on a holiday and I stayed at home to supervise the plasterer.

Stansted is a very nice old village and it has lots of historic buildings there and now it also has a wooden castle constructed there as a tourist attraction. Actually we did visit the place and I really think it lowers the tone of the area but it is visited by lots of people who want to see how things were back in the dark ages.

Eventually we sold the house in Stansted when we emigrated to Australia and got on with the rest of our lives, and I shall tell you all about that in a short while. But first whilst I am on the subject of '**Oakdene**' I felt that I had to tell you that we went back to the house for a nostalgic visit, around about the year 1990 and we were amazed to see that the 1/3 acre block had been developed and the woman whom we spoke to when we knocked on the door at Oakdene informed us that she had paid 157,000 pounds for the house that we had sold for 8,000 pounds in 1970.

And what is more there were actually three other houses all built on the

same block of land that we had owned. I suppose that is progress for you.

Now back to the story.

So now I must go back to Oakdene around 1968. At that time everything was going alright now as I was in regular contract work in Cambridge and my bike ride took me past the '**Audley End mansion**' on the A11 road every day and that was a nice ride. The children were all three in good schools and enjoying themselves.

The downside came when Pam had some trouble with her lungs because as a child she had been living in a very damp location near the '**River Lea**' in Cheshunt, and she had contracted a condition known as '**Bronchiectasis**', and according to our local doctor in Stansted her life expectancy was only going to be around 50 years if we stayed in the United Kingdom's damp climate for very much longer.

And so we began looking around for somewhere to live that was warm, and somewhere that would give Pam a longer life if we moved there. At the time there was a big emigration advertisement programme going on in the media encouraging families to emigrate to Australia.

And so we began the procedure that would eventually see us all coming to live in Australia. The forms and medicals all came and

were done and thankfully Pam was accepted despite her lung condition, and I think today she would have been rejected. This is because it is so much harder now to be accepted if you try and come to live in Australia.

The passage fee for all five of us was **ten pounds** hence the title of this book, and we were just one of the thousands of families who were leaving the cold grey skies of the United Kingdom for a better life.

The terms of the passage were that if you actually returned to the United Kingdom **before** your two years was up then you would have to pay the outgoing fares in full, plus your fares home of course.

But of course we first had a house to sell and the authorities were very good about that as they said that they would fit in with our sale date when it happened, and then give us a departure date. We elected to go to Australia by air as the sea trip was taking about 5 weeks, but many people decided that a five weeks holiday aboard the '**Fair Sky**' and other ships just like it was just what they wanted.

Then we had another momentous decision to make and that was which city we wanted to go and live in. We could have gone to Sydney in New South Wales or Perth in Western Australia or Brisbane in Queensland or Melbourne in Victoria and finally we chose the latter, but I really don't know why we did because we were not destined to stay there..

Looking back to those days now I can only think we were all very brave because to have made those plans was really stressful stuff but we did it anyway. At the moment I am terrified at the prospect of going back to the United Kingdom in May this year for a month.

When we had successfully sold the house we informed the authorities and they issued us with a departure date of **January the 15th** and that gave us a about eight weeks to get organized with the disposal of all of our belongings, and the plan was to rent a house and for me to keep working in Cambridge at Pye TVT Ltd. for as long as possible.

Everything was falling into place nicely and we gradually sold everything we had, except the bare essentials and the plan was to move to a flat that we had rented for a month in Cambridge.

On New Years Eve, prior to our departure date we had been invited to a party at the Finch's house in Cambridge, and we went up there and said our goodbyes after the party and drove back to Stansted.

Upon our arrival home we found that we had been burgled, probably by some of the local lads from the council estate that was adjacent to our block.

They had broken a pane of glass in a downstairs window and got into the house, and they had stolen some of the children's toys, mostly '**action men**' which was a popular toy at that time and we had given them to Martin for his Christmas present a few days before.

We did not have any pets at that time because Sally our black Labrador dog had been given to a good home the week before.

However, there were clear indications that a cat had been in the room as its foot prints were all over the place.

The young policeman who attended the crime was quick to suggest that the break in may have been the work of a '**cat burglar**', but at the time his humour was wasted on me.

They never did solve that crime, but as we were leaving soon we just repaired the window and wrote it off as experience.

When we moved to the rented flat in Cambridge we had sold almost everything except the '**Morris 1100**' car that we still needed for a month, and a huge battery charger that had been constructed as a foreign order whilst working at Enbrays. I left it in the car boot for the new owner as a bonus. Actually it was so large it filled the boot up.

By renting the flat in Cambridge I was able to continue working at Pye TVT until the very last minute as we needed all the money we could get.

With everything now sold and having said all our goodbyes to friends and workmates we departed to the station by taxi as we had two huge zinc trunks that held most of our worldly possessions, apart from a few things that we had kept and had sent on by a transport company, my Rivetts of Leytonstone racing bike was included in that transaction and it was destined to travel around the world twice before it finally ended its days in Australia. The frame is long gone but strangely enough the front forks are still in my garage at this very moment.

The boxes and the bike would be delivered we were told about six weeks after we arrived in Melbourne. They were as good as their word and everything was OK when it arrived.

The zinc trunks were very big and very heavy, and we had trouble getting a porter to help us move them around, I think that they were put off by the sheer size of the things. But we finally got them moved and our journey was under way at last.

Unlike many of the earlier migrants who made the journey by boat we had decided to go by air, and our first stop in Australia was in Sydney in New South Wales where half of the passengers dis-embarked, including the 5 kids behind us who had made the journey quite unbearable at times. We then went on to complete our journey to Melbourne which is in Victoria.

At that time we had three children namely Fenella aged 8, Martin aged 6 and Jeremy aged 3 and they were all sad at leaving their friends and schools, but they were also excited at the prospect of a new life in Australia. In hindsight I don't think they really understood quite what was happening to us all.

We had left Cambridge Railway Station on a very cold day, which **was January the 15th 1970** and within 24 hours we had arrived in **'Melbourne in the state of Victoria'** and at that time the temperature was 104 degrees Fahrenheit which was rather a shock for us all.

We were driven in a bus through the Melbourne suburbs to a district called **'Preston'**, and our new home consisted of a quarter of a

corrugated metal Nissan hut that was not insulated against the Melbourne sun and it was like living in an oven.

This camp had been designed to accommodate immigrant families like ours, and was not intended to be a permanent residence. However, many families stayed there for two years so that they didn't have to pay for their fares out to Australia and then they went back home again. However, they had to pay for the return fares.

The meals that we had every day were given to us in the mess hall or canteen and the first meal was advertised as '**Camp Pie**' and that sounded good to me but actually it turned out to be tinned corned beef and chips and that was our first disappointment of the day.

There was absolutely no air-conditioning in the huts and to get some relief from the heat we would have to walk to the local shopping centre which was of course air-conditioned. The children had a small 'blow up' paddling pool that they used to cool off in because they were not going to school straight away.

Our stay at the '**Preston Migrant Camp**' really was not very pleasant and so we decided that we would try and get out of there as soon as possible. Whilst we were there Martin caught an ailment called '**Hepatitis B**' and as a result of that we all had to have an extremely painful injection, and we had to hold Jeremy down whilst he had his one.

Also Jeremy fell once from the top of a slide in the children's playground onto a hard surface and although he didn't break any bones he did hurt himself quite badly.

The procedure was that once we had settled into our accommodation the camp management people would try and find me a job and help us to fit in as happy and established migrants, but straight away we went out and bought the local newspapers and we started to look for two things, and one was a job for me and the other was a car so that we could move around.

I think we had about \$10,000 dollars when we arrived and so we blew some of that on our first Australian car which was a 1967 model '**Holden HR**' sedan, this was a big car compared to the Morris 1100 that we had left in Cambridge and it felt like a tank to drive. It was white in colour and it had 6 seats and no air-conditioning, but the salesman had told me that it had got air-conditioning when I bought it. After complaining they agreed to put a heater and fan in it but we were still robbed. Enough said about used car salesmen who are a separate breed of human being all together in Australia.

We kept that car for five years and it went quite well, except the clutch had to be replaced twice, and we did have a disaster happen with it one Christmas Holiday when we had hired a camping trailer for the week, and we drove south of Sydney intending to stay at a few different locations along the coast.

Well it was **Christmas Eve**, and we were all loaded up with everything for a Christmas away from home when suddenly we heard the most awful noise coming from the cars engine and we just stopped moving.

Actually we had reached a town called Ulladulla and as it happens we had broken down outside of a Caravan Park, we called the '**NRMA**' and that is the vehicle service organisation in Sydney.

When the service man came to help us he gave us the bad news that the car was not going to go anywhere as the motor had a wrecked

piston. He arranged to have the trailer moved into the Caravan Park, and he had the car towed to a service garage.

When I later went to see where the car was, I found all the mechanics were just having their pre Christmas party, the manager told me that it would be after Christmas before the car would be ready. That was what I expected and so we went back to the caravan Park.

A friend from work and his family were also in that area and I knew that as we had discussed our plans before we went away, so I telephoned him and he kindly arranged to have our camper towed to his brother's farm which is where they were staying too.

Anyway after a bit of a worry about whether or not our cheque for the repairs would bounce, we picked up the car after Christmas and returned home with the Camper Van and returned it in good time from where we had hired it. After that we kept the same car until we decided to return to the United Kingdom a few years later, but more about that later.

Taxi!!!

I must admit that during the 5 years that we owned the Holden HR I had a few accidents but only one was my fault, well maybe two, the first one was when I skidded on a very wet day, and I hit the back of an old Morris Minor and the damage to the solid old Morris was nil, whereas the Holden had to have a new front and a new radiator. Strike one to the British cars.

The next accident was partly my fault and it involved a **taxi**, I had the right hand doors replaced on that occasion.

The next two occasions also involved **taxis** and in each case the taxi driver was to blame, without a shadow of a doubt.

The first one was when the **taxi** drove off the parking area and he wrecked both left hand side doors, at first I got the blame for the accident and the police charged me with dangerous driving. But when I contacted the taxi passenger who had given me his number, we had the verdict reversed and the taxi driver copped the charge and I was exonerated and the next occasion was when a taxi ran into the back of the Holden which wrecked the back of the car.

So to sum up one could say that when we sold that car it virtually had a new body on it.

Now back to the migrant hostel, as we now had a car, finding a job became more urgent and so I found one as a contract electrical draftsman with an electrical switchgear company in a suburb called Carlton, and as it was on an hourly rate of **\$3.38** per hour I tried to work every hour available for a while. Today the going rate for the same job would be about \$100 per hour.

Later that week the camp manager called round at our hut to tell us that there was going to be a meeting soon, that I had to attend so that they could find me a job. In my best Aussie accent I answered “**no worries, mate I already have one**” he walked away muttering and he was probably saying something about “**Know all Pommie Bastard**” but I didn’t really care because we were getting along quite well without their help.

As I said previously many families decided that this was not the life for them and so after two years in the camp they would go home, but although they didn’t have to pay for their trip out they had to save up

for the trip home. Some just got so homesick before their two years was up and so they went home anyway and just paid for both trips.

After five weeks of living in extremely uncomfortable and cramped conditions in the camp we were allocated a new flat in a multi storey block nearby. It was brand new and was furnished completely down to the teaspoons even.

All went well for about 6 months and we decided that we had seen enough of Melbourne and its weather and as we were free agents we decided to move all of our possessions and go and see what Sydney was like.

The weather in Melbourne was not really to our liking as it was hot one day and cold and wet the next, and we were young and adventurous and we just had itchy feet I suppose.

Chapter 12

On the move again

Of course our possessions that we had sent from the United Kingdom had arrived a few weeks after we had reached Melbourne, and so we went and bought a 6' x 4' box trailer and then had the car fitted with a tow bar, and so we loaded all of our worldly goods in the trailer including my trusty bike and off we went on another stage of our great adventure '**down under**'.

In order to do this we had first booked ahead the hire of an on site caravan at a caravan park in Sydney for a few weeks as this would be no hardship for us, after having lived in a caravan at Breach Barns near Waltham Abbey for three years and so off we went with all of our worldly possessions in the car and the trailer which we towed behind us.

Situated between Melbourne and Sydney is the city of '**Canberra**' which is the Australian Capital City so we decided to go to Sydney via Canberra, and see what it was like there. While we had lived in Melbourne we had been to see all of the beauty spots around like 'The Dandenongs' and 'Philip Island' where they have motor racing now, but we just went to see the fairy penguins and the Koala Bears.

That brings back a memory of the night we stayed in Philip Island because we slept in the car at the side of a dirt (unmade) road, and when we awoke to a beautiful sunny morning we set about cooking eggs and bacon on our camping stove.

In the distance I could hear the sound of a high speed car or truck coming down the road towards us, and we thought nothing of it until it reached us in a billowing cloud of red dust that just about wrecked our breakfast. **Mental note: never camp on the side of a dirt road again.**

We had bought an old tent and some camping gear such as a gas stove and chairs etc. but in Canberra we just slept in the car over night and although it was a big car it was not the best nights sleep we have ever had.

The trip up to Sydney was another great adventure for us all and upon our arrival we went to the on site caravan that we had hired and set up our base again. The first priority now was to find a job for me, and then to find a house to rent in the same area as the job if possible.

I soon found a good job as a contract draftsman again, in a place called '**Chatswood**' which is located north of Sydney and the project that I was going to work on was a mining job being done in Gove, and that is in the Northern Territory which is in the top part of Australia, the design work was being done in the Chatswood office so I never had to travel on that occasion.

Next we had to find a house and after looking around the close suburbs for a week we found a house in a place called '**French's Forest**' which is not far from the coast. The house was a wooden one but it was quite nice and we settled down there for a while. Pam had her first experience of the local wild life one morning when the milk delivery man pointed out two huge lizards that were basking in the sun on our drive way, each one was about two feet long but they were quite harmless, well that is what she was told anyway.

At the time the job that I had started on in Chatswood appeared to be a good one that might last for a while, but I was soon given the choice of leaving the company or becoming a staff member and as that sounded a secure position I took the latter. The company policy was not to use temporary contract staff if they could avoid it.

So now with me in a '**secure job**' we decided to buy a house with a loan from a bank and because I had a job I was able to do that. In Australia nearly all the home loans are provided by banks and building societies do not exist over here.

We looked around and found some new houses that were being constructed in a suburb further north of Sydney, in a new suburb called '**Hornsby Heights**'. This would be a much longer commute to work for me but we could not afford to buy a house closer to my job in Chatswood. And as it was on a railway line it would not be too bad.

Hornsby Heights was in the bush really and all around us was virgin land that had not been explored, quite close by was a beautiful public reserve called '**Crosslands**' and you could only get to it via a very rough dirt road.

Our new house was actually about 5km from the railway station that was in the original suburb of Hornsby.

Houses in Sydney were usually constructed with a method known as '**Brick Veneer**' which meant that the outside walls were made from bricks, but the inside walls were made from timber with plaster board attached to the timber. This house was on a large block and it had the usual three bedrooms and a bathroom and a large living room and kitchen, it also had a large double garage under the house. It was

brand new and after we had arranged the loan we were broke, so furnishing it took quite a while and I think we still had itchy feet so we never really put down roots. The lamp fittings we had were plastic and we had taken them from the house in the United Kingdom.

As the floors were bare floor boards we decided to buy some second hand carpet and so I went out with the trailer and bought lots of yellow or gold coloured carpet and then we laid it ourselves, without underlay I might add.

It is usually the case that on a new estate nearly everyone is in the same poor state in Australia and we are known as '**battlers**' and it was a very nice and friendly community. Some neighbours would dress up as Father Christmas at Christmas time and drive around the houses giving out presents to the younger children.

We had some good neighbours whilst we were there named '**Ann and John Riolfo**' and they had three sons named Mark, Peter and Shaun who were playmates for our own children. Later in my story Ann and John would play a very large part of our adventures in Australia. They brought to my mind that old saying that '**a friend in need is a friend indeed**'. I shall get to that part of my story later.

So now we were really living in a bush district, and I remembered that we went up to '**Australia House**' in London a few times before we left the United Kingdom and on one occasion I asked the young Australian woman who interviewed us "**what do you do about the snakes**" she replied that she had never seen one.

That was over 42 years ago and I think she may have been kidding me a bit because I have seen lots of them since then, most of them where we now live in Perth, Western, Australia. But we leave them alone and visa versa so far we have not been bothered by them.

Sadly we have never to this day had a visit from any of Pam's relatives, as she has two sisters and a brother living in the United Kingdom and I am sure that they think that we live in a jungle like situation whereas that is totally wrong.

There are old tales about Kangaroos running down the streets in Australia, well in our neck of the woods which is Henley Brook it is quite true and they are a great hazard to motorists all the time.

Now to continue with the Sydney part of this story.

Early in 1971 Pam announced that she was pregnant again and that she would be expecting a child in the forthcoming December. This came as a complete surprise to us all as we didn't think we would be having any more children. And of course this expected one would be an Australian by birth too.

And so on **December the 17th 1971** our youngest son **Richard John Hall** was born in Hornsby Hospital and he is of course the only true Australian member of the family, not that we hold it against him. Of course that statement does not include our grandchildren because six of them are also '**true blue**' Aussies. Jeremy and Helen's children were all born in the United Kingdom but as their father is an Australian Citizen they can claim residency in Australia in the future if they wish to do so. For their sakes I hope they do that one day.

Pam and Richard were allowed to leave the Horsby Hospital on Christmas Day and before I left the hospital I stuck a notice on the baby viewing room window stating.

‘A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OF OUR BREEDERS’

Pam was not really amused but I felt rather happy for some reason. We had been invited to Christmas lunch by some friends who lived near us in Hornsby Heights, so we enjoyed that a lot at the time. And then we went home to **27, Waninga Road** to start life as a family of six.

Chapter 13

Not quite a 'bed of roses'

So now that we had four children comprising one girl and three boys our life was a bit different, because the new baby was a full time job, and Pam had to leave the part time position that she had been working at in a book publishing office in order to bring in some extra money.

And then to make matters worse the company that I was working for finished the Gove project that I had been employed on, and they announced that they were closing down the Chatswood office because they could not get another project to work on. They made me '**redundant**' and so I was out of work again. This was of course a real problem because we had a house now and the mortgage had to be paid every month or we would be in great trouble.

I decided to take any work that was on offer at that time so as to make ends meet and during this bad period I once did a gardening job and I also painted my drafting agents office one weekend to bring in a few dollars.

I am not a snob and a job is a job.

I resolved to never again take a permanent job and so I went looking for contract work again. I took a succession of jobs in and around Sydney for a few years and I worked on lots of interesting projects

that paid well and I learned a lot about mining and instrumentation and thus this income kept the wolf from the door.

This brought us up to the year 1975 and at that time I was working at a company called **Ralph M. Parsons Pty. Ltd.** In North Sydney, I learnt a lot there that placed me in good stead for my jobs that were to come in other parts of the country later on in my life, I had in fact become an '**electrical/instrumentation design draftsman**'.

Now I am sorry to say that my mother had passed away while we were living in Sydney, and as we never had any money I could not get back to the United Kingdom for her funeral so we had to just grieve over here in Sydney.

After the funeral my father began to write me some extremely sad letters, and then he started sending even sadder audio tapes for us all to hear and it was quite obvious that he was not a happy man.

It became quite clear that we should return to the United Kingdom for a while, and so we began to think about selling the house and all of our possessions once again.

It took us almost a year to sell the Sydney house because it was in an out of the way suburb that we had chosen to live in and we had demanded a price that would give us sufficient money to return to the United Kingdom.

So when we did at last get a buyer for the house we then sold all of our worldly goods again, except my Rivetts of Leytonstone bike and for some nostalgic reason I sent that back to the United Kingdom again.

Once again we had to have a transition period between selling up and leaving the country and so we rented a house in a town called '**Manly**' which is an inner suburb of North Sydney. It was not for long, only about two weeks and then we were off and traveling again.

So once again we began the long journey, we had kept the zinc trunks and so once again we loaded them up with our possessions. Our trip to the United Kingdom was going to be interrupted by a short stop over in Singapore because we had a special offer from Singapore Airlines. At one point when we got there we were asked to open the trunks by some customs officials, and as one was unlatched the contents started to rise up and the guy said "OK I have seen enough. Shut them up". I do recall that at one point Richard had fallen asleep on top of one of the trunks and we let him sleep for a while.

The Singaporeans were fascinated by Richards almost white hair and many of them wanted to touch him. Maybe it was a 'good luck' thing they do.

The house rental situation in Australia is usually quite good because lots of people buy a second or third house as an investment property, and then they rent it out to tenants like us who actually pay off the mortgage for the house owner.

However, when we returned to the United Kingdom the rental situation was extremely difficult and we just could not find anywhere to rent, and we had to stay in **Waltham Cross** with Pam's father and Step mother in a tiny flat at the top of a tower block of flats for over five weeks before we found somewhere to rent.

The flat where they lived was quite small and they had a crazy dog that used to bite the kids, and it also used to do its poos all over the flat. So we had just about had enough of that when just by pure chance we found a house to rent in a London suburb called '**East Barnet**'.

This house had been un-occupied for several years and that was obvious because although it was a solid old house in a good area, it was dusty and dirty and the curtains were all rotten and they started to fall into pieces when Pam tried to wash them.

We had never experienced East Barnet before and it was obviously a good area because there were some very nice cars parked in the neighbour's driveways, and I even saw a 'Rolls Royce' parked in one and the house was like ours just a semi-detached house. Our new address was **55, Lakeside Crescent, East Barnet**.

The next task was to get me working again as our savings were being eaten away after about six weeks in the United Kingdom without a job. That year the summer of 1975 was very hot and traveling around in a dark suit looking for a job was hard work.

I must have spent hours in hot telephone boxes calling agencies looking for work. One strange thing that I encountered was that after five years of living in Australia everyone remarked that I was an Australian, I suppose some of my speech idioms had become very Australian. At that time none of us had actually become Citizens so I had to deny that we were actually Australians.

As we are now '**Australian citizens**' having gone through the ceremony many years ago, I claim to be a loyal Australian supporter in all sporting events especially cycling of course.

After a while, having had a series of job rejections for various reasons I thought that I would try the London office of the last company that I had worked at in Sydney. That was the firm called **Ralph M. Parsons** and they were an engineering company. The manager in Sydney had given me an excellent reference, and with that in my hand I had an interview and the manager of the office which was at Kew Bridge offered me a permanent position as they didn't want to employ me as a contract worker.

So out came the old bike again and I did the daily commute from East Barnet to Kew Bridge via the North Circular road every day, and I survived the traffic. There were times when I thought I was in Mumbai because there were so many Indians walking around the towns wearing saris.

I worked on some interesting projects in the Kew Bridge office but one job that I did refuse to work on was a project in Colerain which was in Northern Ireland. In my opinion it was just too dangerous to go there at that time so they sent someone else.

And so we spent a year getting to renew our associations with Pam's relatives and our friends in and around London. And we did try and console my father who now had a new girl friend of course.

The only problem was that the rent on the house was taking a huge chunk out of my weekly wages, and I didn't think that we could keep living like that for very long.

While we were in the East Barnet house we had bought an old car and although it was a rust bucket it went ok, it was a dark green **Singer Vogue** Estate car and I bought it second hand. In the United Kingdom you have to have a car tested annually and this is known as the '**MOT test**' or the 'Ministry of Transport' test.

One day I put the car into a garage for the MOT test and went back to work.

Later in the morning I received a telephone call that was supposedly from the garage manager, who informed me that the rust on the car was so bad that it would have to be scrapped and also there were many other problems with it.

I sat down in shock and then I heard a guffaw of laughter behind me, and there were a few of my workmates crowded around another telephone at the other side of the office, where one of them had been fooling me with the bad news. They hauled me in hook, line and sinker that day.

Now the main reason for our return to the United Kingdom was my dad and his whinging, but all the time we had been trying to sell our Sydney house he had been getting his feet under the table of one of his old workmates whose wife had recently become a widow.

So now when we returned to the United Kingdom he was not quite so lonely and not as unhappy as he had a new love in his life. The only fly in the ointment was that the new girlfriend did not want to know us, and she was a miserable old woman who detested our kids as she was childless herself.

Eventually after we returned to Australia, and I shall come to that later, they actually got married and went to live together in her house.

We wrote to each other for a while and then one day we received a letter from my dad's wife informing me that my dad had died from **'Prostate Cancer'** a week ago.

She had never even told me that he was ill. And then to add insult to injury she demanded the money that she had spent to have him cremated.

I told her that I didn't have any money and instructed her to take it out of his estate and I never had another word from her.

Many years later our daughter Fenella went on a long holiday in Europe and the United Kingdom and she called on my dad's widow and asked if she had any old photographs or relics from her grandfather. She was informed that it had all been burned or thrown away and don't come back.

When Fenella returned to the United Kingdom just before she was 21 years old she had a most harrowing experience that I shall tell you about later on.

Chapter 14

On the move again and back to Australia

And so after having lived in the United Kingdom for about a year we decided to return, or rather I should say that I decided to return and Pam has always regretted that decision made by me, and many times she has said she should have just let me come back by myself.

However, I am so pleased that she did come back with me or I don't think that this story would have been written.

I just could not settle down in the United Kingdom but Pam thinks that if she had stayed she could have survived, but I don't think so. But anyway we made plans for our return but this time we decided to return to **Perth** which is on the Western side of Australia.

This time we sold the zinc trunks before we departed and so we traveled much lighter with just suitcases. The huge zinc trunks had served their purpose as both items for carrying our possessions twice around the world and also as occasional furniture at times. I can well imagine that they are now being used as coffee tables somewhere in the United Kingdom.

One reason for doing this is that after paying our fares from Sydney to London the year before for two adults and four children, and then we had to make the same payment to return to Australia because we

were not ten pound poms this time. As a result we found that our bank balance was much depleted.

Actually Sydney had experienced a housing price boom during the year that we had been away, so it was going to be cheaper to find a house in Perth when we arrived here, and anyway we had never been to Perth so it was going to be a new adventure all over again.

As it happens we had some neighbours in Hornsby Heights in Sydney who we had kept in touch with, and they too had been doing some traveling around and we knew that they were now living in Perth, so I wrote to them and made some enquiries about the place.

You may remember that their names were '**John and Anne Riolfo**' and they had three sons at that time that had been playmates of my own children.

We went to Australia house in London prior to our departure and we were informed that although housing would be cheaper in Perth there was no work available for me and we were advised not to come here. But casting caution to the winds once again we came anyway as I knew we would be ok once we arrived.

Our friends John and Ann were wonderful and they helped us an awful lot at the time, and although I had only asked them to book a caravan for us as a starting out point, they had found and rented a house for us, this was nearby to where they were living at that time. First they had booked us into a motel in Dianella for the first night of our stay in Perth and then they showed us the house they had found for us. This was actually an unfurnished house but it had enough room for us all at the time.

Over the next few weeks John and Ann helped us to buy the essentials for living and at first we only had beds and a refrigerator that we bought at an auction. When we called a repair man he took pity on us and he repaired it for next to nothing. For a while we managed alright and I then found a job as a contract draftsman again.

Once again I had found work via an agency in the Perth district as a contract draftsman and this of course proved the pessimists at Australia House to be wrong about my work prospects. I used to work through several drafting agencies and although we did have a few worries about being unemployed I was never really out of work for very long. Usually as one contract ended I would commence on a new one.

At that time I still had the bike and so I used that to commute to work, and as the children had started going to school at local schools we bought them second hand bikes so that they could commute to school on them.

Now and again my occupation as an electrical/instrumentation draftsman required me to go to the actual mine site or whatever the project might have been at the time. This would mean that I would have to go and live away from the family for long periods of time. Sometimes in some very hot and uncomfortable places.

This did create great hardship for Pam because with me being away she had the problems of the whole family on her shoulders.

During these working on site times I would either drive or fly to the designated area and sometimes live in either a motel room, or sometimes a '**Donga**' this is a metal room with just a bed and a refrigerator in it and a communal shower and toilet block.

When I was first introduced to one of these dongas I made the mistake of switching off the fridge in the night because it was keeping me awake. Alas when I got out of bed in the morning I found that the fridge had de-frosted during the night and the floor was covered in water.

When I worked at a Mineral Sands Plant in an out of the way place called '**Narngulu**' near **Geraldton** I would sometimes drive home for the weekend on Friday after work so that I could spend a weekend at home with my family, and on Monday morning I would leave the house in Dianella at 3am in the morning and drive the 400km to work with the car windows wide open so that I did not drop off to sleep on my way there.

For a while I worked on the '**Argyle Diamond Mine**' which is in the far north west of Australia near a place called Kununurra. The only way to get there was by air and sometimes it was a commercial flight that went to the site as they have their own airport. On another occasion I flew to Kununurra and then I had to change to a smaller craft for the flight to the mine site and as the next flight was a while before it took off. I went for a walk, and suddenly the rain came down so hard that it was like standing in a warm shower. I turned up for the flight like a drowned rat but they let me on board anyway.

Meanwhile back in Dianella, It was a short time after we started living in the rented house that when we saw an advertisement in the local newspaper announcing the commencement of a cycling club in the area and it was dubbed '**The Northern Districts Cycling Club**' this was because there was already a similar group in the Southern Districts. I went and found the house where Peter and Doreen Huddleston were living in Morley and a short time later Peter came

to our house and he explained about the cycling club and where they held their races.

And so the next Sunday morning we all went along with our bikes to the circuit where this group was having their races, and so we joined the club.

Of course I still had my old bike and by this time it had been around the world twice but it was still a lightweight bike, but not at all modern in appearance. The boys whom I took there that day were Martin and Jeremy as Richard was too young to ride a bike on the open road.

Both of the boys were riding heavy steel bikes that we had bought second hand from adverts in the '**Sunday Times Readers Mart**', that is where most people look for second hand items and sometimes you get just what you want without paying too much for it.

And so the boys were put into races and as they were different ages they were put into different grades. Of course they found it quite difficult racing on their school bikes against kids who had been doing it for a few weeks and neither of them was really fit for cycle racing. But they took part which was the important thing.

In due course we all got better bikes, though we never had enough money to buy new stuff and the boys made the best of a bad job when they competed against kids on better bikes.

Martin was getting quite fit after a few months, as we used to go on long club rides on Saturday mornings and we would both get home quite tired and exhausted, but the next day we would ride down to Alice Street which is where the club had started to have races around some quiet streets unmolested by motor cars.

Jeremy was a determined little boy at that time and he would go out training by himself if he didn't come with us and he became quite successful against lads of his own age.

Of course there was a larger cycling community than our little club and they used to hold what were called '**open races**' and we would enter for these events and travel far and wide to get to the venues. There would be events for seniors and children and Pam had to look after the boys whilst they had their races whilst I was off somewhere with the men having mine.

At that time the only cycling track in Perth was at a location called the **Lake Monger Velodrome**. This was an open air concrete track that was awful to ride on in the summer as it got so hot.

Today Perth boasts one of the fastest indoor tracks in the world at a place called '**The Speed Dome**' in Midland and they have some really good international meetings there.

I achieved some success in these open road events but I never rode in the track events as the boys did, and I did win a classic from **Perth to Pinjarra** and back one year, and that netted me two air tickets to Darwin. At the time I was not interested in Darwin so I sold them to someone who was.

Chapter 15

And so we moved yet again

When we had been in the rented house in Morley for about 6 months we decided that we had saved enough deposit money to buy a house, and paying rent every week was just dead money to us. And so we looked around for a house to buy and because we wanted the children to go to the schools where they already were attending, we decided to buy a house in '**Cornwall Street in Dianella**', which was about 5km away from the house in Morley. It was a brick built house with a roof made from corrugated asbestos cement sheeting. That was a bad mistake we found out later because asbestos can be a real problem.

The house had enough bedrooms for us all, but the room that Martin slept in had to be accessed via the bedroom that Jeremy and Richard were in, so the situation was not perfect. However, it was good for a while and we all settled down again to work and school.

Richard was still a problem as he would not speak to anyone other than a family member, and so when Pam enrolled him into a local school called '**Sutherland Street Junior School**' she had to explain about the incident that had occurred with Valerie's husband Tony a few months ago when we were living in East Barnet in the United Kingdom.

His teachers were very understanding because Richard was a good and bright student and a quick learner too, but when it came to oral

things like reading out aloud to his teacher he wouldn't do it. So we started to record his reading sessions on a tape recorder, and we then got the teacher to give him marks on the basis of what he had recorded for her.

It took quite some time before Richard returned to being a normal boy again, but we always knew he would one day, so we just went along with his way of thinking. We were told by specialists that he just didn't feel the need to talk so why should he?

All the time we were living in Morley, and then in Dianella we did not have a car and as money was very tight we tried to do without one for as long as possible. However, we had made some very good friends in the bike club and one couple who were named '**Peter and Doreen Huddleston**' were very good to us as they too had been immigrants years before so they were aware just how hard it is to get onto ones feet after a move from the United Kingdom even though we had now done it twice.

Peter and Doreen came from Nottingham in the United Kingdom and Peter was a racing cyclist with lots of experience and so he was a founder member of the Northern Districts cycling Club.

Peter was by trade an electrician who used to travel around in a company van and install all manner of things in homes and shops etc. He helped us install a garden reticulation pumping system in the Cornwall Street house in Dianella and it was the hardest day's work that I have ever done in my life. It involves huge concrete well liners and heavy metal tubing and some huge spanners and they all weigh a lot.

Doreen is still a close friend and we see lots of her during our normal weeks as she visits us and visa versa, and she says that she is going to look after our dog Freddy when we go off to the United Kingdom later this year. We hope that she does.

I shall tell you some more about Freddy our Rescued Toy Poodle later on in this story.

Peter would give us lifts to races sometimes before we bought our own car from a woman in Mount Lawley.

Sadly Peter Huddlestone had a stroke about 13 years ago, despite being a fit man and he was not well for several years, until he passed away about ten years ago.

After about 6 months of being without a car I bought an old bomb of a car that was a huge **Ford XP station wagon** and it had a big motor in it that was very thirsty, but it got us around to races and also did everything else we wanted to do with it.

The big problem was that the original paint had almost disappeared and so I decided to spray paint it in the garage one day.

The original paint was green and so I decided to get a nice bright green automotive paint, and I hired a spray gun and started work, of course preparation is all important in that sort of job so I spent hours masking and filling the car body before I sprayed it.

Now at the time I was working as an electrical designer on the '**New Swan Brewery**' that was being constructed in Canning Vale which is about 30km from where we were living, and so it was a good training ride for me to go there and back each day on my bike.

But when the car was looking all new, with its smart coat of new paint I decided to take it to work and show it off to my mates at the brewery.

The only problem was that I worked in a site office and the car was not undercover during the day, to make matters worse it was one of those summer days when the temperature soared to around 36 Degrees Celsius, and when I went out to the car at the end of the day the paint had shriveled up in several places and it looked bloody awful.

There was an occasion once when we were all entered into a three day race and we had an overnight stay at a pub in a country town called Harvey. Now we had almost reached the pub when the clutch on the car stopped working and I thought that we would be stuck there for days. But the next day I sent Pam and the family on their way with others who were also in the race and I set about the task of getting the car fixed.

I found an honest mechanic who saw the plight that I was in and he fixed the car up in an hour and I was off and I caught the entourage up at the next stage of the race.

Not long after that we decided that we had seen enough of the old banger and I leased a brand new car called a **Mitsubishi Sigma** from a local Mitsubishi dealer. We had that for the next three years and then traded it in on a Toyota Tarago Bus.

This was bright red in colour and it had eight seats so it was more than adequate for our family requirements. It was a 1983 model and we bought it in 1984 so it was in very good condition when we acquired it from a dealer in Dianella. We traded in the Sigma which we had leased for three years.

At that time the people from the cycling club started to go for an Easter Camp at a small town about a three hour drive south of Perth called '**Margaret River**'. Actually a couple named Jackie and Ray Read started this Easter Camp and we did it for about 8 years on and off I recall.

The campsite was at a camping site in a little place called Prevelly Park about 5km from Margaret River. This is a popular area for Surfies as there are always good waves there.

Also there is a well known complex of caves in the district and they were organized for visitors to look around in comparative safety. Perhaps the most popular business down there is winemaking and most of the wineries provide excellent food menus and free wine tasting.

However, the real reason that we went there, was so that the cyclists amongst us could go out for a hard ride each morning and get ourselves fit for bike racing. On one occasion we had 27 people at the camp but they were mostly children who did not cycle. They were very memorable weekends for everyone. Sadly we all grew out of the habit and stopped going there.

Our good friend Ray Read passed away later in very sad circumstances.

Whilst I am on the subject of cycling I would just like to spend a few lines while I ride my pet hobby horse and that is the subject of wearing '**cycling helmets**'.

Now in Australia the law dictates that when cycling a person must wear an approved cycling helmet at all times. Now I know that many people object to that law and they use it as a feeble excuse not to ride a bicycle.

In my long career as a cyclist I have always been a staunch advocate of helmet use. I have had many falls from my bikes and some have been serious enough to result in broken ribs and once a cracked pelvis but my helmet has always saved me from head injury.

Usually the helmet is cracked and broken but that is what it is designed to do, i.e. it will absorb the impact with the ground or what you hit and thus save your head and your brain from serious injury.

So take it or leave it but my advice is ‘when riding your bicycle wear a cycling helmet’

When we had been in the ‘**Cornwall Street**’ in Dianella house for a few years we decided to get a new house constructed in a new subdivision called ‘**Noranda**’, and so we had to ‘free up’ our assets by selling the house and then moving to a rented house in Morley whilst the new house was being built.

I know that this all sounds stressful and complicated and of course it was at the time but we were young and it would all be for the better. We have some friends who have been in the same house since they arrived over here but we like to keep moving onwards and upwards we think.

It took about a year to build the new house and we lived in cramped conditions in the rented house, and in fact Martin slept in the garage

which was very big. He didn't mind as he liked to be on his own at times as he was studying for his course at the University of WA.

When the house was finished we moved in and we set about the task of making it into a home. Pam is wonderful at doing that, and she made curtains and I did practical stuff like painting it inside and then we had a great big shed erected in the back garden, and we made the concrete floor with the help of a large concrete delivery truck and a few helping hands to lay the floor.

I had wired it for electricity and then we also reticulated the garden by installing another below ground pumping system, which as usual was hard work and I wired up the electricity again.

We bought the pump second hand from the reader's mart and then I sold the huge starter that came with it for as much as the original purchase so the pump was free really. Sometimes you are lucky.

Fenella's future husband Brian Burrows was very helpful at that stage and he has proved to be a very helpful family member since we first met him. Brian is quite high up in the Commonwealth Bank staff and he has fixed several loans and house transaction searches for us over the years gone by.

Now whilst we were living at this new house in Noranda, Fenella had moved out, and she had also gone off on a trip around Europe with her good friend Carol Pickles who lived with her for a while. They traveled through Europe and Greece and other places and then ended up in the United Kingdom, where they traveled around, and they also stayed with Pam's father and Step mother for a while.

Fenella was 20 years of age at this time and she had promised that she would get back to Perth in time for a 21st birthday party that we

were planning for her when she arrived; her birthday is on June the 19th.

At that time I was working in an office in Perth and when someone came back from lunch with a daily newspaper I saw that the 3" high headlines stated '**British Airways Jet in disaster**' suddenly it occurred to me that Fenella was on that aeroplane as she was due to arrive that day.

We were kept in the dark for a day but the incident is now history and it was that occasion when the aeroplane flew through a cloud of volcanic ash and all four engines failed.

The aeroplane went into a sudden dive and continued to do so for twelve minutes during which time there was complete panic in the cabins as everyone thought that they were going to die.

Finally the captain managed to level the craft at sea level and he managed to start the engines again.

The plane then limped along until it reached Java where it landed safely. Finally we had a telephone call to say that Fenella was safe and well and that she would be home in a few days.

She did arrive home in time to attend her 21st birthday party I am pleased to say.

Later that year a book was written by one of the passengers and sponsored by British Airways and Fenella is mentioned in it a few times. I have a copy of the book which is called '**All four engines have failed**' it was written by **Betty Tootell**. Betty was a passenger on the ill fated aeroplane at the time.

Chapter 16

And so we moved again, Encore

When we had lived at the Noranda house for a while Fenella had already moved out and Martin had moved out, and finally we were left with just Richard and Jeremy at home with us, and so we started looking around for a smaller house, and also we wanted a cheaper one so that we could pay off the mortgage and finally own our own home. I have to confess that we were also having a problem with some very noisy neighbours at the time.

We found a nice little house at '**64 Ashington Street**' in Dianella again and so when we did our sums we found that we were a bit short of money still, until Jeremy announced that over the past years he had been saving quite hard and we knew he was a thrifty sort of guy but when he offered to lend us about **\$8,000** we were astounded, but I agreed to borrow it on an interest paying basis and so we changed houses again. And of course we discharged the bank mortgage and at last '**we owned our own house**'.

So once again we started the job of turning a house into a home and as usual Pam came and did her thing with curtains etc. and once again I built a huge shed in the back garden so that I had a workshop and storage for my tools.

Also the house had a very large games room, but only two bedrooms so we had to divide the games room with a wall which we think had been designed with this in mind, and thus make a new bedroom for

one of the boys. The way the original room had been designed it had double entry doors and a separate door which became Jeremy's bedroom door after the work had been done. This turned out to be Jeremy's room as Richard had already claimed the second bedroom.

This latest house in Ashington Street was in a good area quite close to the Dianella shopping centre and also closer to Perth and my workplace which was mostly in the Perth City now and I could get there by bike quite quickly despite the traffic.

This house in Ashington Street turned out to be the place where we have lived for the longest time during our 52 years of married life as we stayed there for over ten years.

But towards the end of this period we started to have trouble with some Asian neighbours whom were living behind us, they were taking liberties with our rear fence that they were using as a retaining wall for their garden and so we began looking for a way to move on yet again.

And so we started to look for another house to live in, but we didn't want to move too far from our house in Ashington Street.

Finally we found a house for sale at number '**38, Emander Drive**' and this was in what I thought was a good part of Dianella and the drive went around three sides of a passive park called Emander Park.

This house was to me a really nice place and it was shaped a bit like a boomerang with nearly all of the windows facing the park. Unfortunately it didn't have a garage but it did have a large carport and a brick built workshop for storing the bikes etc.

I fell in love with the house and I insisted on buying it, and at the time Pam went along with my ideas, but unfortunately she decided after a while that the house was not a happy house. She insisted that the house gave of '**bad vibrations**' and possibly this was because she was aware that the previous owner's wife had died there. And so we decided that we would have to move again, but it was about three years before we actually did that.

By this time Pam had got used to the house, but it was still a bit inadequate for our needs as it did not give us sufficient privacy from the park we thought. Once or twice we had to endure the thumping of a basketball at three o'clock in the morning which was not very nice. Also the neighbours next door had been burgled.

Now we have always been cyclists and Pam and I have been riding our tandems for almost 20 years now, and one of our frequent rides was down to a location known as **Maylands**, which is a suburb close to the Swan River and we noticed that the area was being developed for housing and it was a large estate with lakes and pleasant paths etc. and it was only about 500 metres from the Swan River as the crow flies in an area called the Maylands Peninsula.

After much thought and doing lots of sums we decided that we had enough money saved up to buy a block of land there, and so we selected a suitable block and bought it. We had no intention to build straight away as we wanted to see what sort of houses other people would build there before we built our house. Thus if we were not happy with our neighbours we could just re-sell the block at a profit.

I have not mentioned before that in the past few years we had also bought two houses as an **'investment'** though that term is a bit of an oxymoron as we didn't make much money out of either of them.

The first one that we bought was in Noranda and we had tenants in it for a few years, but finally we sold it and we made enough money to finance a trip back to the United Kingdom and that was about all.

The second one was really a means to help our eldest son Martin get out of a very difficult predicament, because he had been forced into marriage at a very young age when his girlfriend was pregnant. The marriage turned out to be a total disaster because his wife Erica suffered from Schizophrenia.

In the following years he got a divorce from Erica and he won custody of the daughter that his wife delivered and Erica ended up in a mental institution for a while.

The child's name is Leesa and she is now 27 years of age and she is going to get married at the end of this year. Now whilst Martin had custody of Leesa he was also at university and he was studying for a **'PhD in Microbiology'** and so he was finding life very hard to manage.

And so we bought a house at number **'18 Bayley Street'** in Dianella as an investment property and we put him and Leesa in it as tenants.

Of course one should never put relatives in a rental property and in the five years they lived there, we never raised the rent and we did all the work around the house and gardens too.

I recall one terrible day when a large area of the ceiling fell down and the scene reminded me of the war years and the blitz back in the United Kingdom. Well we overcame that at great expense and then Richard asked if he could go and live with Martin and we agreed that it was a good idea.

They got on quite well even though there is a big age difference between them and Leesa didn't mind the extra company at the time.

They stayed there all together for a while but we had our own plans for the future, so we suggested that they might think about pooling their resources and buying a house between them.

This was an excellent idea they agreed but they did not have enough money for a deposit, so we agreed to lend it to them and they could repay the loan over the next few years.

The things we did as parents are sometimes very questionable, but we do them anyway.

Pam and I had this plan and that was to move to the house that the boys were sharing which was also in Dianella in Bayley Street, when they bought their own house and that would then enable us to sell our house in Emander Drive in Dianella and thus free up enough money to start building the house in Maylands. This was as usual a very stressful time for us but it all went well for a while.

So the boys moved to a nice house with a swimming pool in Ballajura that they bought together. That is a suburb north of Perth and so we eventually moved into the Bayley Street house in Dianella

One problem with the house the boys had used in Bayley Street was that it was in need of improvements and Pam insisted on having new carpets fitted and also getting the floorboards sanded down and polished and finally she wanted a new kitchen fitted as the existing one was old and un-hygienic.

After doing some more sums we found enough cash, and so we started on the various projects and got them done one by one. And so to conclude this latest move we sold our house at Emander Drive and we moved in to the boy's house at Bayley Street and we lived there for about a year and a half.

Construction on the house in Maylands began and that started badly as the bricklayers made some errors that were not planned and they had to start again, and so I began the task of visiting the site almost every day either on my way home from work or at the weekends.

I actually had lots of trouble all the way through construction and I had better not mention the builder's name even though I would like to. I actually '**bad mouth**' them every time I discuss builders. They were a big company in Perth but they did not look after us very well. Actually the builder's name rhymes with '**Tussle**' and that is what the building process was.

When we had built the Maylands house I was about sixty years old and I was working for a company in south Perth called '**BEC Engineering**' as a contract draftsman and at that time nearly all design work was being done on computers and there were two main software programmes in use at the time. These were called '**AutoCAD**' and '**Microstation**' and I got to know how to use them both as one needed to do that to survive in the industry.

In this new era of engineering design drawing boards and pens and set squares etc. became a thing of the past. Of course this was a major development for everyone and it was a case of learning the new technology or be out of a job.

But due to a down turn in activities around Perth a few people began to be put out of work as there was not sufficient work to keep everyone employed.

Now I was quite happy with my position at BEC and when they offered me a permanent position I decided to take it and hopefully it was going to keep me employed until I retired. I recalled my previous 'permanent' job in Sydney many years ago.

Geoff Bailey was a top boss to work for and it was hard to distinguish him from any of the workers in the office as he was not a boastful person. His only problem in my opinion was that he is a '**workaholic**' but as it was his own business he did what he wanted to do.

For a few years I had been doing a lot of oil painting as a hobby and so when I took one or two large landscapes into the office Geoff offered to buy them from me and so I was hung in the BEC office and to the best of my knowledge the paintings are still there.

Our house also has lots of my work hung on the walls but ever since my cataract surgery I have not felt confident to paint again.

'Retirement for' me happened when I was just a bit over 65 and I decided that my life was too valuable to waste any more of it by going to work every day.

At the time I had been working in my very last permanent position at this company in South Perth called **'BEC Engineering'** or The Bailey Engineering Company.

When I decided to retire the owner of the company who was Geoff Bailey decided that he would put on a big dinner and other things for me and two other employees who had decided to retire at the same time.

It was extremely well organized by a lady named Jenny and us three old farts all arrived at this posh restaurant by the Swan river in Perth, and we arrived in wheelchairs that were being pushed by three young girls dressed as nurses.

They had organized a splendid dinner and speeches and a DVD disk had been prepared so that all of this could be recorded at the time.

And so we settled into a retirement mode where our income reduced considerably as we were now getting a pension from the Australian government and also we had previously arranged that we would also get a small pension from the British government in payment for all of the years that we had worked in the United Kingdom.

After a while I looked around for other ways to pass my time and I began working at a volunteer position at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) on Mondays. I have always loved dogs and being near them, but this was a labour of love because my job was to clean out the dog cages and that entails

picking up buckets full of dog poo. And some of the dogs had been very poorly treated and were there to be re-homed if at all possible.

Some were there as evidence of cruelty whilst their owners were prosecuted by the RSPCA. I lasted a year at the job and then I had a difference of opinion with the volunteer supervisor who insisted that I would always wear ear covers for my safety and I disagreed. So I did not go there any more.

Chapter 17

Our final resting place (Famous last words)

We designed the house at number **2, Halifax Road in Maylands** as though it was going to be our retirement home and we incorporated every comfort that we could afford and we had it finished of completely so that we just had to move in and start living there. The only thing that we had to do was to paint the interior of the house and Pam and I worked flat out every day for two weeks prior to the moving in day. It was hard work but we managed it ok without any help from the family.

The Maylands area was very nice and we had some very pleasant walks along the Swan River and the bicycle paths went almost past our front door. There was a Golf Course 400 metres away but apart from a few games with BEC employees I stayed away from the place.

Maylands is a historical area because it is the site of Perth's first airport and on the golf course all of the greens are named after famous aviators. It is also where the Perth Police academy is sited and they house all of the police dogs and horses there.

We thought we would never leave that house and they would have to carry us out in our coffins, but after about eight years we grew tired of the place, and as Richard was now living in his own house in Ellenbrook with Sharon his wife and the two children Amelia and Jai we decided to move closer to them and thus help out with the kids sometimes.

Before that Richard and Martin had found that they were not as happy together as they had hoped to be, because Leesa was becoming hard to live with and so was Martin. Also Richard had found Sharon who he is now married to and they wanted their own house. And so Martin and Richard sold their house and went their separate ways.

In fact Martin bought a house in Alexandra Heights and Richard bought a house in Ellenbrook which is not far from where we are living now.

As I was saying earlier after about 8 years we looked around and we found a house in a suburb near where Richard lives called '**Henley Brook**', and this house has much more land than the Maylands house and it is a nice rural district so we bought it.

Of course we had to sell the house in Maylands and that took a while, but eventually we sold it for a good price and that enabled us to bank some money because the house we bought in Henley Brook was a lot cheaper.

We achieved this change over of houses with the method that is known as '**subject to sale**' and that simply means that we had what is called in the United Kingdom a chain of sales. Simply put, when our house became sold we bought the new one.

So here we are now after moving to Perth in 1976 we have built two houses from scratch and owned several others and rented a few in between and although the house in Maylands was going to be our

retirement house that was not to be, The old saying '**never say die**' comes to my mind here because there is always something new on the horizon I think.

Our one regret in all this is that Jeremy went to the United Kingdom to live in 1995, and at first we were under the impression that he would have his fill of the United Kingdom climate etc. and then come home to Australia to resume living here. Sadly for us that was not to be the case because he met a girl named **Helen Neat** at the end of Brighton Pier one day and that changed the course of his life (and ours too) for ever more.

Helen came to Perth the next year with her mother Joyce and her brother Duncan, and Pam and I met them and escorted them around Perth for a few days and we found them to be a very nice family (Helen's father had passed away some time before).

So when Jeremy telephoned us to say that he was going to get married to Helen we were not surprised at all. The wedding was planned so that Fenella's family and Pam and I could go to **Penang** which is where they had decided to have the marriage.

And so we all met in the hotel in Penang where we were staying and they had a formal wedding in '**Georgetown**' and then an informal wedding at the hotel for all of the guests and it all went off very nicely except for the temperature which was very hot and uncomfortable, even for us as we are used to high temperatures.

Around the year 2001 Jeremy and Helen told us that they were going to come and try and live in Perth for two years to see if Helen could actually settle down over here. So they rented a very nice house just a stones throw from our house in Halifax Road, and they bought lots of furniture and white goods, and then Jeremy found it rather difficult to get computer analysis work that suited him, so he was out of work for several months until he landed a contract job that he could do.

Sadly they only lasted a year in Perth, and then Helen insisted that they go back to the United Kingdom to live.

Quite frankly I think that if they had sold their house in Brighton before they departed they would not have gone back there, but instead they just rented it out to students and when they arrived back in the United Kingdom they just resumed living there.

They eventually moved to a house in a village called '**Hassocks**' in **West Sussex** where they enlarged a semi-detached house with Helen's mother's money and they all live there now. We have visited them several times and we are going again in a few months time.

Jeremy and Helen now have three young sons who are all bright young boys who are doing well at school but I just wish they were over here with us in the sunshine.

And now in hindsight I believe Helen wishes she had stayed here, because life for them all has been extremely difficult for them over the past few years since Jeremy was diagnosed as having **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphomatic Cancer**. This has completely wrecked his previously good health and as a result they are now not so well off as Jeremy has had to put work on hold many times, whilst he has had chemotherapy to keep the Cancer under control.

However, every cloud has a silver lining they say, and in Jeremy's case he has found that he has a talent for writing novels and to date he has two very good stories selling well on the Amazon website. The second book entitled '**Summer Days**' is selling quite well on Amazon at the moment he tells me.

Of course we do have a '**daughter and two sons and 6 grandchildren**' living in Perth and that is quite good we think. Our eldest granddaughter Leesa is going to get married later this year and her father who is my son Martin got married last year for the 2nd time and he is quite happy now with Kate his new wife.

Chapter 18

But wait! There is more, as I have a few more things that I want to write about before I finish

First I want to tell you all about our adopted city which is of course **Perth, W.A.** the WA stands for **Western Australia** which is on the left side as you look at the map.

This city is the most isolated state capital city in the world, but I like it that way. The weather is usually perfect and it is a rare thing when it is cold even in the winter. The seasons are the reverse of the seasons in the United Kingdom and at present we are in mid summer in January and the current temperature is 36 Degrees Celsius and that is very warm.

In fact this week in January 2012 is a heat wave week and the temperature is the hottest week for the past 47 years.

Every day has a forecast of 40 Degrees Celsius and Saturday will be 42 Degrees Celsius.

The city itself never sees snow but we had some car damaging hailstones last year that made the panel beaters rich for a while. It does sometimes snow in the southern areas of course as they are closer to the Antarctic.

In this part of Australia we have many things that can harm you such as spiders and snakes, but when you compare the number of people who die on our roads as a result of car accidents every year the creatures are not really a problem.

The bicycle path network in Perth is one of the best laid out systems in the world, and the constant fine weather makes cycling a very nice pass time.

Pam and I ride our tandem all over Perth and I still have my racing bikes that I use frequently with my club mates.

We also have the Swan River passing through the city and that is of course the jewel in the Perth crown and we often ride around the river paths in the city.

There are no mountains in Perth but there are hilly areas and lots of National Parks that can be enjoyed by one and all for free.

I could go on and on but why not just come and see for your self what a wonderful place I live in. Many of my friends have been tempted to come out of retirement with the offer of big salaries but not for me as my motto is taken from a fridge magnet that I bought from the National Trust a few years ago. It states as follows:

‘Retirement is when you stop living at work and start working at living’

Chapter 19

So now it is the year 2012 and here is a summary to date

Almost three years ago Pam and I had both reached our allotted life span of three score and ten, and we had decided that there were still more good years left in us so we moved to our current house in **Horseshoe Circuit in the suburb of Henley Brook.**

There is an old saying that '**rolling stones gather no mosses**' but that was quite untrue in our case. As nomads we found that moving our possessions around from house to house over the previous years had doubled our 'moss' and so when we left Maylands we had a grand 'garage sale' and after a few days work we made some cash and sold off all the junk that we didn't want to take with us when we moved.

All of the stuff that we didn't sell we put into the trailer and carted it off to the Salvation Army charity shop.

After having built our 'retirement house' in Maylands we had grown tired of the district and the small courtyard that looked at our neighbour's garage wall was very restricting, and we yearned for a garden at the back of the house to look out to.

The area was too crowded with people as in that estate the developer had crowded as many home sites as they could into one area.

I read a report recently that stated that in about 40 years time the city of Perth will have doubled in size and in its population. My grandchildren may have to worry about that but we won't. They say that by that time the population of Australia will be around 35 million people.

Maybe that doesn't sound too many when compared with Great Britain and the United Kingdom, but we are mostly clustered around the coastal areas of the country at present.

And so since we made our '**Escape to the country**' and left the hustle and bustle of Perth behind us we are enjoying a much quieter life style and if the wind is in the right direction we can hear horses neighing and chickens crowing and we just love it.

We often watch that United Kingdom television programme '**Escape to the country**', and we view the British countryside with envy sometimes because despite what we read and see on the television about the doom and gloom situation in the United Kingdom, there are obviously still many pleasant places to live over there if you just leave the city rat race behind.

At the time of writing this story we have four children and nine grandchildren, I am always sorry to say that three of our grandsons are living in the United Kingdom with Jeremy and Helen.

Richard and Sharon have two young children aged 3 and 6 and we baby sit with them when we are asked. That is quite alright because

as we all know you can give them back when you have had enough of them.

This suburb or village where we live is called '**Morgan Fields**' in Henley Brook and before the houses were constructed the whole area was used for breeding horses for racing and other pursuits. All the road names are horse related and ours is Horseshoe circuit and we have Martingale Crescent and Shetland Road etc.

This suburb is built around a very pleasant landscaped lake complex and that is where Freddy and I walk every day.

I can imagine that **Horseshoe Circuit in Henley Brook** conjures up pictures in your mind of lush green pastures and babbling brooks etc. and cattle and sheep but that is not the case at all. Most home sites like ours are around a $\frac{1}{4}$ acre in area but there are lots of 5 acres and 10 acres and the owners still keep horses on those.

The nearby town of **Ellenbrook** is also divided into villages and it is now about ten years old with an expected population of 30,000 people when it is completed in another ten years. We have two shopping centres and we can buy most of our requirements without leaving the district.

Now when I say we have villages they are nothing like a British village I assure you. The names like Morgan Fields and Charlotte's Vineyard are designed to entice the innocent buyers to the area.

We find that the country roads in the area are quiet enough for us to venture out on our tandem bicycle, and I also ride my own bikes several times a week with my cycling club friends. Also there is a

keen group who ride out from the local bike shop called Bikeforce on Saturday mornings every week.

Actually we are located in an area known as '**The Swan Valley**' and it is a tourist Mecca with lots of Wineries and Breweries and Restaurants all over the place. We are gradually working our way through the restaurants but it all takes time and it is very hard work.

Chapter 20

This chapter and the ones following are miscellaneous items.

The Cancer has all gone

As previously stated somewhere, I do tend to ramble a bit so please bear with me and I promise I won't go on and on, but I will try and hold your attention (If you get bored then I shall never know if you switch me off and I won't worry about it either) I am a '**hunt and peck**' two finger typist so it does take rather a long while to write one of these memory articles.

The heading of this chapter may intrigue some of you, but those five words "**the Cancer has all gone**" were said to me a few years ago by my Urology specialist/surgeon Mr Sydney Weinstein when he gave me the wonderful news on the telephone.

Only the week before, I had been the subject of a **Radical Prostatectomy**, which simply means the total removal of ones Prostate Gland. This was the end result of about ten years of PSA blood tests and other problems that elderly men endure, and up until a few years ago we men never ever discussed the matter in public and we just suffered in silence, nowadays the subject is openly discussed and so more lives are being saved, and that is a very good thing.

You may recall that my father had died at the age of 69 years from Prostate Cancer, but I was determined that I would not go the same way.

But the knowledge that the Cancer has gone now gives me a new lease on life and at 74 years of age I am sure I can get another 20 years of life (Unlike my poor old father who died of Prostate Cancer at age 69).

Furthermore, eighteen months ago I had my eyes operated on because I had my cataracts removed and that was truly wonderful. Maybe you will recall my school days as a seven year old and getting the catcall '**Four Eyes**' shouted at me, well no more of that and I can see perfectly for great distances.

However, I do require reading spectacles for typing this story and for reading. I think that the latest technology even improves on that too.

Chapter 21

The Hall Dynasty

Of course the most important thing that has come out of my humble beginning all those years ago in Rochford, Essex on '**August the 4th 1937**' is my wonderful family.

So I must now give you all a detailed description of each of my children and in turn their children i.e. my grandchildren. **Too boring for you maybe, well maybe you should just skip this part, but anyway if you are still with me here goes:**

Our eldest Child **Fenella Ann Hall** was born in Epping hospital in Essex on **June the 19th 1961**.

Fenella was a lovely little girl who was a very good baby and later on a good student at school. She was hospitalized on three occasions and once was when for some reason only she knows she put a bead up into her nostril, and we just could not get it out for love or money. In the end we took her to hospital and they retrieved it in no time at all.

The next time as a child was when she had her Tonsils removed because she was suffering with Tonsillitis every year and we were advised to have them removed. She was only about five at the time.

Another time was when she was experiencing lots of abdominal pain and she was diagnosed as having Appendicitis. We think that the surgeon was drunk at the time because he left an awful scar on her stomach.

Fenella was always good except maybe when we returned to the United Kingdom in 1975 and we lived in East Barnet. She has confessed that she used to wag school at that time and maybe if we had stayed there she would have gone off the rails completely.

Between the ages of 15 and 20 she had a few boy friends and escapades and of course we were kept in the dark about most of what went on in those days.

Fenella had a good friend whose name was Carol Pickles and they used to get into all sorts of scrapes and at one time they lived together for a while. Carol still keeps in touch with Fenella today.

In **1985** Fenella was married to Brian Burrows and from that day on she became **Fenella Burrows**.

Fenella never went to a University, but in later years she attended studies that qualified her as a teacher's aide and she spent several years working with Autistic Children at various schools in Perth.

Fenella and Brian have raised three children as follows:

Rory Mitchell who was born on August the 9th 1989

Aimee Louise who was born on May the 23rd 1991

Thomas who was born on February the 16th 1993

The next child to be born was **Martin Leonard Hall** who was born on **March the 29th 1963** in Thorpe Combe hospital in Walthamstow E17.

Martin was a very placid child and soon after he was born we moved from the caravan into our first house in Bishops Stortford., Martin would walk around the building sites with me when I came home from work and we had a great time together.

We had a terrible accident one day when he was just a toddler and it happened as I was drilling some holes into a fireplace, so that we could add some bars to it. Martin tripped and fell onto the drill and at first I thought that he had been blinded.

I have never forgiven myself for that accident, and these days kids are not allowed anywhere near me when I am working with tools. Luckily Martin's eye was ok but I think it was a very close thing.

Martin was a brilliant student and a good cyclist too and when he did his final school exams he had a good enough total to get him into University as a medical student. Unfortunately Martin had found out all about girls at that age and he spoilt his chances by failing his 2nd year at university. Now Medicine is an extremely hard course to get into and only the top echelons of students are selected to do the course. And so when he failed that year he was not allowed to continue.

So as diligent as he was he started working upon a degree in **Microbiology** and after a few years he passed the course and got his degree. Martin was a really good student and he next studied for a PhD and he is now a **Doctor of Philosophy**.

Martin was married at the tender age of 21 in 1984 mainly because his girlfriend Erica was pregnant at the time. Sadly the marriage did not last and they got a divorce a few years later.

After his divorce from Erica he fought for and won custody of Leesa his daughter and that held him back a lot, so much so that he had to take mundane jobs as a teacher in far away remote parts of West Australia.

Eventually Martin settled into computer analysis work and he left all of his science studies behind him. He is now the head of his department in a company in Perth and he is doing quite well.

Two years ago Martin married his second wife **Kate** and he is now very happy with his life.

Martin's daughter **Leesa Lesley Hall** was born on April the 22nd 1985 and she is getting married later this year (2012).

There is another incident that occurred in Martin's life and it happened when he was about **eleven years of age**. This incident changed my attitude towards that group of Aussies commonly referred to as **Surfies**.

These are the young men and women who take delight in risking their lives by surfing the waves and risking the occasional shark attack whilst they are out there.

This is what happened, Martin and I were enjoying a splash around in the surf at a beach south of Sydney, and everything was good until I suddenly realized that I could not touch the sand under the water.

When I asked Martin if he could reach the bottom he told me that he was out of his depth too.

When we attempted to return to the beach we found that we couldn't because we were caught up in **a rip**. Now that is when the sea has an under current that hits the beach and then rushes out again, dragging everything with it, including us.

Many people die in rips every year, and I began to panic because I had this awful feeling that we may even drown. I could see Pam on the beach frantically jumping up and down urging us to come in closer but we just couldn't.

And then a miracle happened, because this young lad with shoulder length blond hair came near us and asked if we were in trouble.

He was like a **guardian angel** and I asked him if he would help us. So he dragged Martin up onto his surf board, and then with me hanging onto the back of it we all moved along the beach and so by doing that we got out of the rip.

We both reached the beach and we sat down absolutely exhausted, and when at last I looked up the boy had gone back to join his mates, and he probably didn't even know that he had just saved two lives. I never did get to thank him because they all looked the same out there.

The next child to be born was **Jeremy Robert Hall** and he was born at home in the main bedroom at 140, Stortford Hall Park on **April the 13th 1966**

Jeremy was a quiet child who was no problem at all, He too was an excellent student, and when we returned to Australia he attended The Mount Lawley High School, and in his first year which was year 8 he

became **DUX** of his year. (Top student) and he was also awarded a scholarship by the Shire of Bayswater for his outstanding efforts.

Jeremy was also a very talented cyclist and I think he was destined to be a really good cyclist capable of representing the country so at that time we all became Australian Citizens. So that he could achieve his goal. But sport gave way to his studies and apart from riding to school every day, the sport was forgotten.

His final exam marks enabled him to enter University and maybe because of my influence he started on a degree course in Engineering. However, '**like father like son**' he had made the wrong choice and he realized that Engineering was the wrong course for him so he used his credits to get him into another course and that was to do with computers and he now has a degree in his chosen subject.

Jeremy decided that he would like to go to England for a while and gain some experience, so he left us and went back to his birth land the United Kingdom.

It was both a happy and sad day for me when Jeremy informed us that he was going to marry a girl named **Helen Neat**, whom he had met in Brighton which is where he was living at the time. I had the dreaded premonition that Jeremy would never come back to Australia to live again.

They were married in **Penang in the year 2000** and quite a lot of the family went there for the wedding.

It has not been easy for Jeremy over the past few years because he somehow was afflicted with **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphomatic Cancer**, and he has had to have many bouts of Chemotherapy which has ruined his health but at the same time it has saved his life.

During this sad time Jeremy has risen above his problems and he has written two excellent books that are now selling well on Amazon. The second one I thought was brilliant and it should be made into a good film.

Jeremy and Helen have raised three sons:

James William George Hall Born November the 10th 2000

Thomas Hall born January the 9th 2002

William Noah Ruben born October the 7th 2005

Our youngest son is **Richard John Hall** who was born in Sydney Australia on **December the 17th 1971**

He was a brilliant student and he has a quick mind for calculations and he was destined to end up working in a bank one day I was sure.

But however, Richard had other ideas, as his ambition was to become a musical rock star, and he formed several garage type bands and as a group they had minor successes in pub gigs around Perth.

And so he rejected the idea of getting a university degree and just kept on playing music whilst he worked at menial jobs during the daytime.

After a few years of not breaking into the big time Richard decided that it was time to get a real job and so he started work in a bank at last.

Pam and I had decided to take a United Kingdom holiday in the year 2005 and we were staying at Jeremy's home in Hassocks at the time when we received a devastating telephone call from Australia. We were informed that Richard had been the victim of a '**stroke**' and he was in hospital in Perth.

We had only arrived in Hassocks a few days before and now we thought that we must return home straight away as Sharon would need support at this time.

But after speaking with Richard on the telephone he assured us that he was going to be alright and he would recover soon.

Well over the next week he began to get back his faculties and he once again told us not to cut the holiday short because he was going to recover. This was such a stoic attitude for someone so ill at the time. But recover he did and his perseverance with physiotherapy treatment enabled him to start to walk again and by the time we returned to Australia he was 99% perfect.

Today you would not know that he had been a stroke victim seven years ago, because he now exercises regularly and keeps himself fit

by riding his bike to work and we think he will have a long and happy life.

He is now working his way up the corporate ladder to success and over the last ten years he has been studying for a '**Batchelor of Business degree**' the hard way i.e. at night school, and at last he has achieved his goal as he now has that hard won degree. We are very proud of him and his achievements.

Richard met **Sharon Cochran** whilst he was a musician and they were married in a beautiful Park ceremony in Perth in 2004.

Richard and Sharon have raised two children

Amelia Shirley born February the 22nd 2006

Jai Cameron born November the 22nd 2008

Chapter 22

Man's (and woman's) best friends

I just had a look at my memories story so far and I thought I could still add a little bit more of the story... whilst I am able to type!

I have had many emails from people far and wide about my memoirs and it is quite extraordinary how many original Walthamstow people continue to look at the Walthamstow Memories website which is managed so well by the site custodians.

Please drop me a line by email at lcpmhall@bigpond.com I will be delighted to hear from you where ever you are.

“Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a century old now, and hoping to get a telegram from royalty in another 25 years time”. If royalty still exists then.

This year of 2011 was rather a sad one for us because our beloved black Toy poodles **Bonnie and Muffin** both passed away in the first part of the year.

They were both around 15 years of age and when they got to be very ill we just had to have them put down. Bonnie died in February and Muffin in July. Those days were so sad and we resolved to never have another dog as the grief was so hard to bear. If you have ever been a dog owner you will know just what I mean.

We have had dogs of all types over the last 51 years, Mainly Irish and English Setters and also Labradors and a white poodle too but those two black toy poodles left an indelible mark on our memories.

However, after a few months of grieving I started thinking about a dog rescue and there are so many homeless dogs out there that are being cared for by foster carers while they try to find homes for them.

Recently my friend Daniel from Walthamstow Memories sent me a really lovely item by Eugene O'Neill entitled the last will and testament of an extremely distinguished dog. In the will the dog implores his owner to take on another dog when he passes away.

Here is the poem reference:

www.superdog.com/petloss/lastwill.htm

Finally after looking at Pet Rescue sites, we found **Freddy** who is an 8 years old Apricot coloured miniature poodle with a very nice temperament and so we decided to adopt him.

The trouble with adopted dogs is that you cannot be sure of their history and we have found that Freddy has been a spoilt brat and we are now in the process of de-sensitizing him from being 'top dog' to a lower rank.

This re-programming is now going really well and we are able to remove food from his mouth if the need arises and he is now learning that there is a better way and he is fitting into our family very well.

This is all being done by love and kind words as Freddy is a really nice little guy deep down.

Freddy already sits and stays etc. and does most other good behaviour things.

In short he will never replace **Muffin and Bonnie** but we love him to bits anyway.

So now we are in the grip of another Australian summer and hoping that it is not going to be as hot as it was last summer when we had so many hot days that even I started wishing for winter to start. This week which is in January and almost Australia day again (26th) the temperature is over 40 Degrees Celsius every day with a top of 42 Degrees Celsius on Saturday. God help us.

The major problem in Australia at this time of the year, not counting sharks, snakes or crocodiles of course is the threat of a bush fire. We have so many disasters here as a result of carelessness and sometimes vandalism and many homes are lost every year and a lot of lives too I am sorry to say.

One has to be so vigilant with fires and at times we have a total fire ban in the open air. Unfortunately last year a man (who should have known better) was using an angle grinder on his trailer and sparks set the bush around his house on fire. **That ended up by burning down 72 surrounding houses**, fortunately no one died this time.

Another hazard is that people do tend to get eaten by sharks when they tempt fate and swim in the sea. Another man went missing last month in Perth seas off Cottesloe Beach and they have only found his bathers so far, the damage on them indicates that he was taken by a Great White shark.

Before we came to Australia we were so worried about snakes and I can now tell all you worriers that I have seen more snakes in Great Britain than over here. Make no mistake that there are snakes all

around us and they are very poisonous, but in 41 years of living here we have seen about 3 and they were all going away from us.

There is another myth about Australia and that is that kangaroos hop down the main streets in towns. Well that is not true of course but in our local roads we do get kangaroos hopping along and it can be very hazardous as they cause a lot of damage to cars around here. Also a few friends have collided with one whilst riding a bike and then my friends have come off the worse for wear.

Another hazard that we have at present is '**Magpie swooping**' during their nesting season. I have had this happen to me several times this week and what usually occurs is that I would be riding under some trees and suddenly I have felt a 'Whack' on the back of my cycling helmet as a Magpie hits me on the back of my helmet with his beak or claws to show his disapproval of me being in his territory. It usually only goes on for a few weeks and then they stop being so aggressive, however, a few people have lost eyes etc. in the past.

At present in 2012 we are planning to visit our son and his family in Hassocks which is in West Sussex and possibly go on a bus tour of England as a Swan Song before we get too old to travel and hire cars etc.

The problem is that a holiday like that is so expensive now and I recall that I used to get a B & B for 10 shillings and 6 pence when I cycled over there.

I think we may be looking at much more than that now, One hotel near Marble arch named The Thistle charges \$370 per night for a double, I think that is outrageous.

Chapter 23

Cycling Time Trials in the 1950's in the United Kingdom

I wonder just how many of you Walthamstow people are aware that for many years now there has been a parallel world operating in the early hours of the morning in the British countryside.

These people, who cycle around the highways and byways at dawn, are known as the cycling time trials fanatics, and they were governed by an organisation called the RTTC which stands for '**The Road Time Trials Council**'. Now taken over by '**Cycling Time Trials**'.

These are a band of people who for years now, since the beginning of the group in 1922 at least, have been getting out of bed at the crack of dawn on Sunday mornings and competing in the Cinderella sport of cycling time trials.

When the sport first started the riders had to be completely clad in black clothing from head to foot in an alpaca jacket and black leggings and they always had to be completely off the roads at an early hour or they were prosecuted by the police.

The sport was really started by a guy named Frederick Thomas Bidlake in the late 19th century and here is a link that will explain a bit more about what life was like in those days.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Thomas_Bidlake

Unfortunately Frederick was hit and killed by a car in 1933 so maybe he was also a forerunner of that popular pastime today i.e. '**let's hit the cyclist**' and it happens all too often these days as we are aware.

Actually there is a memorial garden to F. T. Bidlake on the Great North Road and here is a link to that area. It is easy to miss but it is worth a visit if you are in the area.

<http://www.bidlakememorial.org.uk/Memorial%20Garden.htm>

Around the mid 1950's when I was participating in the sport in the United Kingdom, officialdom was slightly more relaxed, but events would still start at 6am or earlier on Sunday mornings all over the country, and with up to 120 riders starting at one minute intervals this meant that the last man (or woman) was given the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, OFF and started on his or her journey by 8am.

And so in a 25 mile '**out and home**' event (ride out to a turn marshal and home along the same stretch of road), the road would normally be clear by 9.30am. Or later if the event was over a longer distance.

Thus the normal Sunday motorist would be unaware that the road has been

Occupied by lots of cyclists just a short while ago, and maybe the only evidence might be a banana skin thrown into the hedgerow here and there, or a discarded bidon (drink bottle).

If a motorist did go that way early in the morning he may have been surprised to see many cycling capes at the side of the road, these would be left near a guy with a stop watch in his hand, as guys would leave their belongings under the waterproof cape whilst they went out to try and get a P.B. (personal best time).

I don't remember ever getting anything stolen but it would be a different story today I think.

I should perhaps explain that although there can only be one winner in a time trial the object really is to try and beat your own best time over the distance i.e. to get a P.B. i.e. a personal best.

Remember the old adage **'it is not winning that counts, it is taking part that is all important'**.

When you see the effort that the top performers put into a ride, that old saying is hard to believe. In the old days you would be lucky to get a cheap medal for a place on the podium; but these days everyone takes cash as a prize and the old true blue amateurs are just beings of the past.

There is a nation wide annual competition that has been in existence all of this time and it is known as the BBAR competition, this is **'The British Best All Rounder'** competition and it is based on 3 distances that are 50 miles and 100 miles and the 12 hour time trial. The first two distances are usually raced over 'out and home' courses.

In the latter events the riders start at one minute intervals and they ride all over the countryside on a carefully measured distance for a period of 12 hours exactly and the rider who covers the greatest distance is the winner.

The winner of the BBAR has the best aggregate speed over those three distances (50, 100 & 12hr) and it is usually a very hard won competition with some guys traveling from England to Wales and beyond to try and get a fast morning on a fast course, this would happen all through the summer season.

Of course there are events conducted all over the British Isles and there are many recognised courses and some are faster than others.

In the East Anglia district the two most commonly used courses were the E1 which was on the A11 road and the start was usually at the

32nd milestone which is near the village of Ugley, just past Stanstead Mountfitchet and Bishops Stortford.

When I was 21 years old I once rode **250 miles and 384 yards (403km)** in a 12 hour time trial and that only got me a third place.

Of course this village is more widely known the world over because it hosts '**The Ugley Women's Institute**'. Nowadays there is a nice pottery shop there too.

The other course was the E3 which started and finished on the A127 which is more commonly known as The Southend Road. Now who hasn't ridden their new bike down to Southend, or at least claimed to have done so?

This course was recognised as the fastest course in Britain despite the fact that there were numerous roundabouts and Raleigh cutting to negotiate, I recall that there was even a bike path alongside the road; but as it was always full of bottle glass it was never used.

Everyone will have heard of the legendary British cyclist **Beryl Burton**, well she once came down from her home in Morley to the E3 course as she was looking for a fast 50 mile time for the women's BBAR and I am proud to say that she caught and dropped me by more than five minutes on the day. It was something to boast about to my grandchildren in my later years.

She was a legend in her own lifetime and it was a tragedy when she died aged 59 from a heart attack whilst riding her bike. Here is a link to perhaps the greatest female cyclist of all time:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beryl_Burton

Actually I think the E3 is no longer used now as it had become too dangerous to ride on, this being due to the many cars that frequent the roads now.

In this present time only the diehards will cycle to the start of a race as nearly everyone has a car now. Also the machines have become so much more technical and so light that they are only suitable for racing. A typical machine will weigh less than 7kg and cost around 5,000 pounds sterling and some fanatics will spend even more.

At another level was a guy named Graeme Obree who developed his own bikes and became a world record holder on a bike that he constructed out of parts from a washing machine.

They made a film about him and several books and he was known as 'the Flying Scotsman' here is just one link to his story:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Graeme-Obree-The-Flying-Scotsman/104526719586865>

Just for the present time this is the end. But wait; there will be more to come over the next 25 years, if only I can survive for that long.

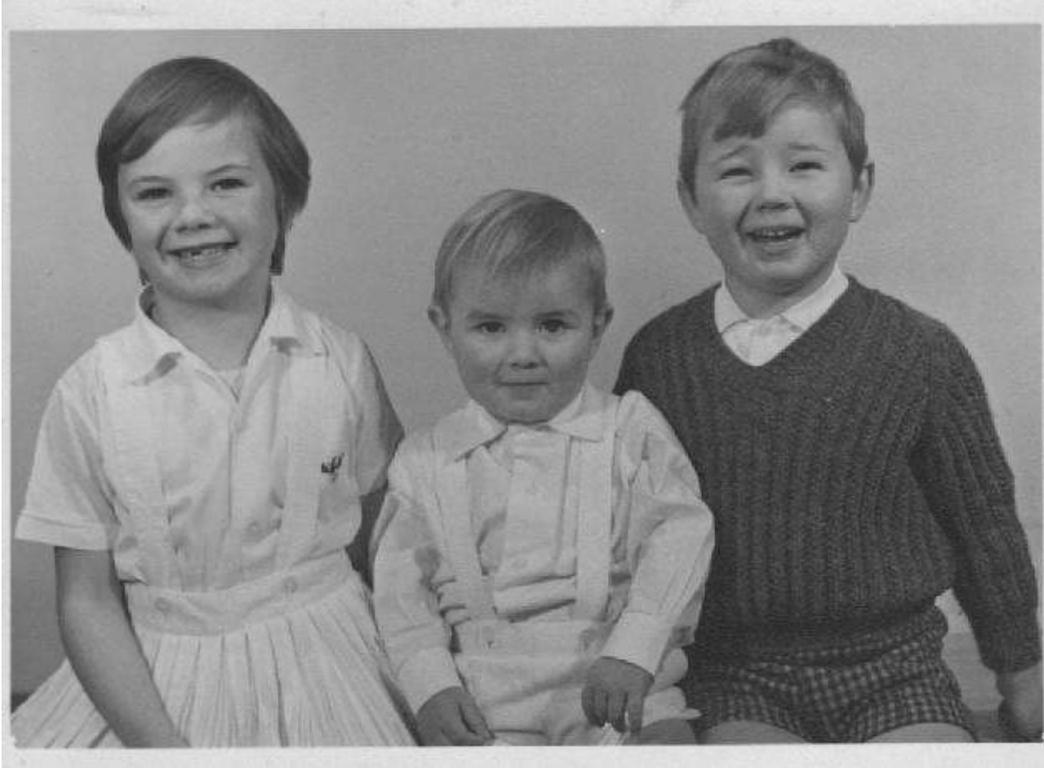
Photographs relating to this story



Len as a baby



Len as a young boy



Fenella at 6.5 years, Martin at 4.75 years,
Jeremy at 1.5 years



Pam and Len Hall



Ready for school 1970 in Sydney



Len and some of the grandchildren



Our Ford Thames 5cwt. Van



Pam and the tandem