

# LAKELAND LIFE

1954-1960



Alan Macfarlane

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## Preface

*Lakeland Life* is part of a series of books which I am writing which describe my early life and education. *Indian Infancy* covers the years in India from my birth in December 1941 to my return to England in 1947. *Dorset Days* and *Dragon Days* (with Jamie Bruce Lockhart) cover my life from 1947 to 1954 in Dorset and 1955 at the Dragon School. My own account of the Dragon experience is in *Becoming a Dragon*.

*Lakeland Life* describes my home life in the Lake District from 1954 to 1960 and is paralleled by *Sedbergh Schooldays*, an account of my time at Sedbergh School in Yorkshire 1955-60. Later volumes will take the story on to Oxford University for six years and beyond.

All of the volumes are principally based on contemporary documents, especially letters written by members of the family. This volume is based on several sets of letters, my mother's to me and to my father (when she was away from him on home leave), my letters to my parents and my sister Fiona's letters to my parents. It is also based on a number of short diaries and accounts I wrote at the time of travels and of my first love affair.

There is hardly any of my own writing in the previous volumes, but from the age of fourteen I started to keep papers carefully and also to write with some an eye on the future. I also begin to remember this period of life more sharply, memory becoming much clearer from about the age of fourteen. I have not included many undocumented memories, relying mainly on what was written at the time in the attempt to see those changing years through the eyes of myself and my family in the contemporary materials.

I have also refrained from much analysis of what was happening to me, though I may increase this at a later point when this part of the picture can be set within the larger story of my life before and after the Lakes. At present this is a set of field notes taken at the time, describing a boy of thirteen turning into a young man of eighteen.

This is a descriptive ethnography, 'thick description' or partial archive, which may be of value to historians in the future. I may write a more generally concise and reflective account based on this, an anthropology rather than ethnography, in the future.

I have not always been able to trace those whose letters I quote. Where I have been unable to obtain their permission, I have usually just given the first name and a letter to shield their particular identity.

There are numerous people who have contributed to this book, but I shall only mention only two. My sister Fiona wrote a number of the letters quoted here and I am very grateful to her for permission to use them. My wife Sarah, as always has been a careful critic and has reshaped the book in so many ways, and given me encouragement to proceed.

# **ARRIVING**

## Moving North

I was born in Shillong, Assam (India) on 20th December 1941, where my father had joined the army from the tea plantation where he was working. He remained as a plantation manager throughout the period of this book, so my parents were away for most of these years. The family had originally returned to England in April 1947, that is my father Donald, my mother Iris, my sister Fiona (born in April 1944) and sister Anne (born in June 1946). After a summer in Oxford and an autumn and Christmas on the Dorset coast we had moved to a rented house near Broadstone in Dorset in January 1948.

There I had gone to kindergarten and my mother and Anne left me and Fiona in October 1948 with my mother's parents, Will and Violet. During the next seven years before going to Sedbergh my parents came on leave twice and I visited Assam for one winter holiday. My main companions during this period were my sister Fiona and my young uncle Robert, born in 1933 and hence only eight years older than me and already at Sedbergh school. The period in Dorset is described in *Dorset Days*.

In September 1950 I went to the Dragon, a boarding preparatory school in north Oxford. I was a middling level student at the school. I was anxious and unsmiling for the first half of my time there, but was happy and a successful sportsman by the end. I was noted for my tenacity and reached the stream below scholarship level by the end. I was then accepted for entry at the school where my mother's three brothers had been educated.

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My parents and grandparents had been searching for a house in the south of England for some months, but when my mother returned with my sisters in the summer of 1954 the search for a permanent place to live became more serious. My grandparents were getting older, Aunt Nell was wanting to sell 'By the Way' and my parents do not seem to have been able to afford the asking price. So there are a number of accounts in my mother's letters of abortive efforts to find a house. They illustrate well the strain it put on family relations and the difference in philosophy between my cautious grandfather and over-optimistic and ambitious grandmother. They also show how much of a whim it was to move from Dorset to the Lake District and how the final shared purchase was almost accidental. They possibly also suggest a very gradual improvement in the general financial situation as the miseries of the early fifties gave way to slowly rising salaries.

On 27<sup>th</sup> July 1954 my mother wrote *We are vaguely on the look-out for a house and Mummy is always answering advertizements but nothing develops*. Then on 23<sup>rd</sup> August she wrote *I'm beginning to look around vaguely for houses, not with any definite purpose yet, but I think it's time we were thinking of moving on*.

On 30<sup>th</sup> August my mother wrote in more detail.

*Mummy and Daddy went off on a wild goose chase this week-end to look at a house in Herefordshire going for £800, it looked lovely from the picture, on the banks of the river Wye with its own fishing and boating, glorious country etc. we had worked out where we would all sleep and the name of the boat we would have but of course they came back without having bought it!*

*Apparently it was terribly trippy with motor boats roaring past your front door and hotels all round, and then in the winter you are left in isolation as all the hotels close down. Of course there was bound to be a snag at that price and one never knows with M and D as they aren't really keen to buy a house when it comes to the point, I was sorry as we could then have stayed on here for your leave. Still I am a firm believer in something turning up.*

The tension between my grandparents is reflected in the next account on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

*Mummy nearly rushed off to Farnham to-day after another house but Daddy was so gloomy about it and the financial ruin they were on the brink of that she gave up the idea. It sounded rather nice but cost the same as this and is a very expensive place, stiff with aristocracy and Major Generals. I don't know if we could afford to help towards buying a house, could we if it came to the point, I don't know how much if anything we are going to have of our commission after the Kyahs [merchants] have been at it.*

My mother then left for a trip to Scotland to see my father's brother Alan and his wife Jean, leaving the house in Dorset in confusion and anger. She wrote from Scotland on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

*I was glad to get away from "By the Way" really as Mummy was in such a rage that Daddy wouldn't let her look at a house somewhere that she put all her chickens up for sale, cancelled all her papers, stopped her racing and made Daddy stop his pools and generally made us all feel uncomfortable and the atmosphere tense. It is really hopeless as Daddy won't look at anything but the cheapest houses and of course there are snags. Mummy goes for expensive places which Daddy won't hear of. I think myself it would be best for them to stay put until Robert is "finished" and their expenses less, but Mummy must have her own way or everyone knows about it. So I think I shall be staying at Ambleside unless its awful. How I hate being homeless and dependent on other people.*

Things were clearly coming to a head, so as she came back south from Scotland she stopped off in the Lake District. From Borwick Lodge, Outgate Near Ambleside, very close to where we finally bought a house, she wrote on 21st September to my father.

*This cottage is delightful and I've fallen completely in love with the Lake District, so if they will reduce the rent I shall definitely come back here. The purple hills and green fields and fat sheep and rushing streams are so beautiful and peaceful, and there is fishing and riding and skating in the winter – the only snag is that this place is a mile from the bus stop and in the winter might be cut off if there was heavy snow – but I think we could risk that. It depends how much they're prepared to meet me over rent. I'm looking around for somewhere else more permanent as it would be ideal if I could persuade Mummy to come up here.*

Five days later she wrote again announcing that she had rented a house, Beck House on the outskirts of Windermere.

*I've had a busy week and have ended by taking a house – darling don't have a fit. I know it's rash and expensive but I'll get a job or a peg or something – but this is the place to live and the house is heaven and we shan't need to go anywhere else for our amusements as it has everything – coarse and trout fishing, boating, sailing, golf and heavenly walks and rides. It'll mean we can't afford our continental holiday but we can go on a tour of Scotland and Wales instead and we have got to have a house and it'll save train fares for the girls.<sup>1</sup> All this sounds as if I'm trying to justify a wrong decision, but I've never been so certain of a decision being right, the house is a gem, the owner is an architect and designed it himself. It has central heating and a garage and a small garden and inside is roomy but compact – beautifully furnished – 3 minutes from the bus stop but down a lane so not too noisy and very close to the lake by a back way. It is £5 a week and I've taken it for a year from Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> which is very reasonable as rents in this part of the world go shooting up in the summer but I've taken it at a flat rate. When I'm on my own I shall definitely take a job and also try to do a bit of writing and I'm sure will be able to make some money. Do hope you won't be cross, but Mummy's plans are so vague, that I want a home for ourselves terribly badly. I'm hoping I can persuade her to buy a house up here too, there seems lots of property going and it would be so handy for all the family. ... shall collect all our bits and pieces*

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<sup>1</sup> My sisters Fiona and Anne had been enrolled at Charlotte Mason College in Ambleside, to start in the autumn term 1954.

and return here at the beginning of November.

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My parents and grandparents seem to have been continuously on the move when they were in India and were used to organising others to heave large numbers of boxes and trunks about. Although the distances were much greater, the presence of large numbers of servants usually made it much easier than it was to become in England. The move from Dorset to Windermere was a mere 300 miles. Yet the move was made more difficult by the absence of my father and by the fact that my grandmother was a great hoarder of things, as is revealed in the letters. Fortunately my mother was not able to throw away too much and the astonishing family archive which my grandmother collected was not lost. The move was repeated, but over a short distance, when the family moved out of the rented accommodation in Windermere to our own house near Hawkshead in the early summer of 1955.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1954 my mother wrote to my father

*A week of packing and more packing, mine is now just finished but Mummy is still milling through old letters and magazines. I sometimes despair that she will ever get moved but I suppose she will! She has 10 boxes of Granny's to sort through too, she keeps pulling out huge albums of old newspaper cuttings [rubbish] and saying they really are rather interesting and putting them back again! The confusion here I leave to your imagination, the garage looks as if an atomic bomb had recently hit it! Daddy seems stunned and wanders vaguely round picking tobacco leaves out of the welter of wire and squashed newspaper and stuffing them into his pipe. He is getting so vague, I'm really worried about him sometimes (no cracks darling, I can be almost efficient when you're not there to lean on.) I've taken over the cooking but Mummy just spends a bit longer over her racing. Anyway things always do work out and it's no use panicking.*

A week later on 18<sup>th</sup> October she wrote on further progress.

*Another uneventful week, during which Mummy has pulled out such a mass of possessions that we now have to eat meals off a corner of the sideboard – she spends her time saying “What a dear little bottle” or “I'm sure I've got the saucer of this somewhere” and packing the dear little bottles and odd cups away, today we filled 4½ tea chests with the china of various descriptions and there still isn't room to put anything down! I've been wrapping and packing since 10 a.m. with half an hour off to boil potatoes and eat them, until 7.30 p.m. so you can imagine am pretty weary with a crick in my neck, and will be wrapping and packing in my head all night!*

Four days later, on 22<sup>nd</sup>, she wrote:

*We got rid of a lot of stuff today, all the boxes of Granny's scrapbooks (8 large trunks!) and 7 tea-chests of China and all Mummy's odds and ends of furniture, it filled the lorry which was a large one! So now there isn't a lot to do, although there is still a lot of jabra [rubbish] about – when nobody's looking I go round with a large wastepaper basket filling it and slinking round to the dustbin – if Mummy catches me it's fatal! Yesterday we cleaned out the garage which was enormous fun and filled four dustbins. Daddy has now decided to come up with me on 29<sup>th</sup> and Mummy is going on a round tour and following a couple of weeks later. I'm longing to go, it will be heaven to feel settled for a year, I'm tired of all this shuffling around and not having anywhere to put my things.... Life has calmed down here, the bulk of Mummy's stuff went off to be stored on Friday, filled a large lorry! I was very relieved to see the back of the tea chests, and the house is looking a bit better, though there's still a lot lying about.*

Ten days later, on 1<sup>st</sup> November, my mother wrote again from the other end of the move, Beck House in Windermere.

*It seems about a month since I last wrote, can't believe its only a week such a lot has happened. I'm so relieved the move is over, and that I haven't got to pack or unpack again in a big way for a year. I'm a bit weary but very happy to be back in this lovely place and near the girls again, wish in a way I could have had it to ourselves but I suppose that's selfish really. We had a hectic last week at "By the Way", the whole place becoming more and more chaotic and difficult to live with, it simply amazed me the amount of rubbish we'd been living with. Daddy and I set off at 6.30 a.m on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> and got here without incident at 5.15 p.m. Daddy flapped madly all the way up, that we would miss trains, lose luggage, not get taxis etc., I suppose it was quite an expedition for him as he has practically not been further than Broadstone for years! It was raining when we got here (it has been for weeks apparently, there have been heavy floods in Scotland and parts of this district) and we were pretty tired but Daddy got into a panic that we had no milk and made me go off with the agent to look for some! Eventually I returned plus some tinned milk which placated him, and concocted a meal, and we had hot baths and fell most thankfully into bed. Saturday was hectic as I had to check the inventory with the agent, shop, collect the girls and produce lunch for us all.... This morning the lorry arrived with our stuff, they hadn't been able to fit everything in but brought most of it. Mummy of course had thrown in endless bits of wood and old buckets and huge bundles containing the inevitable photograph albums wrapped in nondescript bits of material that I have been trying to stow away all day!*

The final comment occurs three weeks later on 21<sup>st</sup> November, when my mother briefly notes *I got rather irritated with Mummy as so much of the stuff is utter rubbish, one trunk was full of old paraffin tins! But I daresay we'll be able to shift things somehow, have to!* The old paraffin tins may not have been entirely necessary, though they reflected a world where 'waste not, want not' was a deep part of middle-class philosophy, and one which as I hoard old jars and tins I still understand. But it was extremely fortunate that the precious collections of photographs and papers from my great-grandmother were mostly preserved.



## First experience of the Lakes



Beck House near Windermere

I remember the house well, stone and pebble-dash, standing over a small stream which ran under the garage and flooded from time to time when we were there. It lay down a little road off the main Windermere to Ambleside road a few hundred yards out of the town.

The house had a relatively small garden, though big enough for miniature tennis. However, the path that led down for a mile or so to the edge of Lake Windermere more than compensated for this. It was very beautiful, as my mother describes in her letters. It entranced me with the unfulfilled prospects of huge perch and pike. It was a realisation of my ‘Swallows and Amazons’ imagination, and I also loved Bowness and the walks up through the bracken to Orrest Head, or to a little tarn about a mile beyond Windermere where I fished for trout.

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A brief impression of those preparatory months in the Lake District, focusing on my own experiences and my mother’s initial reactions to the wonderful scenery, can be extracted from a number of long letters she wrote in the period between November 1st, three days after she arrived, and early April 1955 shortly before my father returned home.

On 1st November 1954 she described a first walk.

*Yesterday, Sunday, we spent the day saying “I wonder what Daddy is doing now” and hoping you were celebrating in some way. [My father's birthday was on October 31st]. I flung the joint and spuds into the oven and we went for a walk down to the Lake in the morning. I can't tell you how beautiful the country is looking now, the trees are turning gold. There are masses of trees (too many really) but at present it is as if the whole countryside had caught fire, and the bronze of the beeches against the smoky grey of the lake and the hills*

*was indescribable. We got back in time to make the Yorkshire pudding and had a jolly delicious first lunch, and then the girls insisted that we go and see a wonderful waterfall near Ambleside. So off we set again, by bus and then walking. It was a beautiful (if strenuous) walk through woods and the waterfall most impressive, and we eventually got home at 5 in time for high tea and pretty tired but full of fresh air. The air here is almost like a taste – or have I told you? As you see I'm dotty about the place, do hope you'll feel the same.*

I returned back from the Dragon School on 14th December and my mother wrote:

*Alan came back on Saturday, as I think I told you, in good form and very chatty, but yesterday morning (Tuesday) he started feeling low, and to-day has been in bed with flu – so I'm relieved I got him back in time to nurse him here. It's a childish variety, so I trust we shan't all succumb – he is running a temp. of 100.8 which is nothing much and has read two detective novels to-day and listened to the wireless without a pause and is no trouble. I went and collected the girls Monday afternoon in the pouring rain, had to bring their boxes back in a taxi which was irritatingly expensive – so now we are a full house and for the last two days I seem to have been getting and clearing away meals all day! ... They [children] are so good and helpful (at present!) and it's heaven to have them – Fiona and Alan are very pally and Annie is a bit left out but she's been making yards and yards of paper chains and so far no fights! The weather has been frightful, but to-day was a golden dream, a still, peaceful day with sun from morning to night – something we haven't had for weeks. After lunch we left Alan to his 3<sup>rd</sup> murder and went out on our bikes exploring, the roads are terrifying, the traffic whirls along and there are some awful corners, I couldn't let the children out on their bikes alone, but we found a lovely road and a river and the views were exquisite. We shall have some good fishing in that beck, it's nice and close. Alan rushed straight to the lake with his rod, but the experts say this is the wrong time of year so there isn't much hope.*

Aged almost thirteen, my memory for places and incidents are starting to be recoverable and I can picture these scenes, especially lying in bed devouring the Leslie Charteris 'Saint' books for which I had a craze.

My mother's next letter, written on 27th December describes in detail the Christmas celebrations which I remember well, always the summation of our family life, though sadly without my father present. It is worth quoting fully as a vignette of our family dynamics and my interests at this time.

*The shouting and the tumult is dying here, but there is still a fearful mess and "glitter" is getting into the food at every meal. Still it was fun, and the children were delighted with all their presents and the lunch was a success in spite of my heaving the boiling ham-water all over myself at a critical moment! Alan stayed in bed a full week with a temperature that wouldn't go down, but came down to the drawing room on the afternoon of his birthday and we pulled a few crackers, he was up for the whole day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> which was the day of our party. I had rustled up a few of the girls' friends and fortunately Alan has a Dragon friend living nearby [Stephen Grieve] and the girls brought along one brother so we had ten children together. The three boys retired into corners and made scornful remarks but otherwise it was a success I think, quite an effort getting the food collected but the only flop was the birthday cake which looked lovely but when cut turned out to be completely raw in the middle, fortunately the guests were all too full to want any. We played the usual games including Murder which consisted of everybody including the murderer rushing screaming downstairs every two minutes saying it was much too frightening but they insisted on going on playing! Alan had spent the previous two days saying that he didn't want a party and he was going out for the afternoon and what did I want to go and ask a lot of fleb girls for, but when it came to the point enjoyed it though it was rather a hectic beginning for him.*

*The next two days were spent in hectic last minute shopping and wrapping. Richard and Robert arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> at lunch time so I've had eight people [which includes Iris' parents] to plan and cook for on top of everything else, all rather overwhelming especially as we've had three days without shops this year and this evening we are absolutely out of anything edible and have one spoonful of tea for the morning. Robert departed this afternoon which will ease matters, I staggered back on Friday weighted down with fruit and he polished off four bananas before I had put the shopping basket down! I started the children off on their stockings on*

*Christmas morning and then went off to early service and got back for late breakfast. We started on the lunch almost immediately, a large chicken which Mummy had ordered (I had got two small ones but we needed the lot) ham, and Christmas pudding plus the usual nuts and wine, it was all done just right and afterwards Richard and Robert took the two elder kids down to the lake and Anne and I cleaned and scrubbed and tidied and when they came back we had the tree, then tea, and then I was prepared to fall in a heap but Robert of course wanted supper, in fact they all sat down and ate baked beans except the kids and I who drank Bovril and went to bed.*

*In between we had played Murder and Scrabble, a new game which they had been given, and apart from the weather it was a most successful day only not perfect because you were missing but we toasted you in a variety of drinks and hope you were enjoying yourself darling. Yesterday Sunday there was a distinct feeling of anti-climax and every body was cross and tired, in the morning Richard drove us out to look at two houses at Grasmere which M and D had thought of renting but one was too isolated (a glorious place perched on the side of a hill with the whole lake stretched out in front) and the other too small with the bath in the kitchen. I don't know if they will ever decide on anywhere, I don't think Mummy really likes it here, I don't really know what they want.*

*This morning I spent washing and cooking and playing Alan's new football game [Subuteo] while the others walked, and after lunch Alan and I drove with Robert to his friends' house where he is spending the next week, and onto Grange to get petrol and there was the sea spread out in front of us, quite a surprise as one forgets one is near the sea here. We got back for tea and then out into the rain once more to the local cinema to see a funny film called "Up to his neck" which was extremely funny in bits, the cinema is very one horse but matey. ... I haven't started on my thank you letters yet, the children stand on their heads and write theirs at intervals and Anne is forever trailing me with a dripping fountain-pen and asking me how to spell Edinburgh when I'm coping with several saucepans of boiling-over milk! Richard leaves on Friday and Robert on Sunday and then there are only two weeks of holiday left, life will seem very dull and quiet without them all but it will only be three months then till you come – unbelievable.*

After my week away with my Dragon friend, I returned and remember going to the pantomime described in my mother's next letter, but not the freezing picnic. My mother wrote on 3rd January:

*On Wednesday Richard drove us in to Morecambe to the pantomime, we did it in record time and all arrived feeling rather sick as it was a switchback sort of road but restored ourselves with bars of chocolate and ice-creams and the pantomime was terribly good, not too sophisticated or frightening and we all enjoyed it. Afterwards we had tea in the restaurant and ate cakes full of very mock cream and were feeling sick again by the time we got in but altogether enjoyed the afternoon... On Thursday ... the kids and I got our bikes and took our sandwiches out too, we crossed the lake in the ferry and explored some way and then ate our picnic in a temperature hardly above freezing. Quite mad! We got home at 4 p.m just as it was getting dark, pretty tired but full of fresh air – the only thing that terrifies me are the main roads which are narrow and full of huge lorries racing along far too fast – one false wobble and you've had it and I am scared sick until we get off them. On Friday Alan had been asked to spend the day with a school friend [Stephen Grieve] who lives at Elterwater, about 6 miles away, so Richard drove us there and then on to look at a house which is to be let. Alan's friend is a charming boy, and his mother is very nice, quite young and a widow, living in this tiny place with no car or telephone, but rather a heavenly spot with a lake and river and mountains.... On Saturday Richard drove the kids and Mummy to a meet and they all climbed enormous mountains apparently and saw the fox several times and came back very wet and bruised for their roast beef... I expect you've been listening to the Test Match most of the time, it is quite encouraging this time if we don't make a bish of it as Alan says.*

A week later, on 11th January, my mother describes further events towards the end of our holidays.

*The girls go back the day after to-morrow and Alan the day after that, so I'm trying to find time to wash and mend and list, it's a lot easier than last time anyway. Alan and Fiona are both looking forward to going back, but Annie is very undecided. I've asked if she can be a weekly boarder this term. Today has been perfect, the sun*

*glistening and the hills looking plum-coloured and very close. The children went out to tea to-day with a family whose mother I met at a coffee party, a very large and posh house and very elegant inside according to their descriptions – rather out of my class altogether. We walked with them and back by the lake, it was ice-blue and the black trees etched against it were like a Chinese pastel picture – or have I said that before? Yesterday it snowed sufficiently to lie for a little, but not enough to use the toboggan – however we have hopes of to-morrow when there is to be more snow and we might even get some ice, solid enough to bear Fiona! She is getting enormously fat and bursting out of the new skirts I've made her. Alan knocks her over and sits on her frequently though, just to show he is far the beefier type. He had his friend to spend the night last week. An awfully nice boy and Alan was a different person with him around, obviously what he needs. They shot airguns and played trains and went fishing and were no trouble. We should have had another son you know, but it's too late now – don't flap darling, my maternal instincts will turn full blast onto you now, I'll have you modelling in plasticine in no time at all!*

I went back to the Dragon School on the 14th and three days later my mother went for a walk with her father and gives another vignette of the new-found mountain land in winter.

*Daddy and I went on for a walk up what is normally a road but is now a snowy lane, the views were wonderful, blue sky, white hills and all bathed in golden sunshine, just like that Swiss calendar we had. I must get the film put into the Ciné to-morrow and try to take some snowscapes. The air of course is wonderful but I feel sorry for farmers and old people and birds – we spend a lot of time feeding the latter and watch them through the window, the robins feed from our hands. Yesterday wasn't so nice as a blizzard was blowing and it was bitter, I went to church and got snow inside my boots on the way there and sat with my toes in an icy puddle all through the service. The chilblains are fearful as you can imagine and I had to thaw them out with warm olive oil when I got back. Still we can't complain as this is a very warm and comfortable house, and we're never likely to get cut off, but I spend such a lot of time feeling sorry for everyone else that I don't have time to enjoy my blessing much.*

Much of the next couple of months were spent searching for a house to buy, as described in the next chapter, but there are occasional further pen portraits of the developing year. My sisters were at school at Charlotte Mason College in Ambleside and came home at week-ends. My mother wrote on 11th March of one such outing and a walk as spring arrived.

*The girls came out at the week-end, Fiona brought yet another friend and we went down to the lake for a walk and then came back to tea and games by the fire. The woods by the lake are a mass of bulbs which I think will be daffodils, you should arrive just in time to see everything at its best, I do hope you will like this place as much as I do, I think you will because it's very like the highlands only not quite so rugged.*

I returned from the Dragon on 25th March and there are further descriptions of life in the few weeks before my father would return, in a letter of 27th March.

*Alan arrived on Friday evening a friend of his travels all the way with him and they seem to enjoy the journey. His sickness turned out to be nothing, thank heavens. He looks tired as usual after the term but very cheerful and is very absorbed with his electric trains and is really taking pains and concentrating on them which is a change. Yesterday afternoon I took them to see "The Yeoman of the Guard" as done by the Windermere Grammar School. It was very good I thought, though a bit wooden in parts – but Alan was most scathing and compared it unfavourably with Dragon School productions, wrongly actually! ...*

*This morning the sun was shining, so we took out our bicycles and went out to explore for a tarn where we can fish, we had a map but went too far, however we eventually ploughed across country and found the tarn, and had a lovely walk and got back in time to cook up the spuds for lunch. The views were exquisite as usual and it was so blissfully peaceful, though quite close to the main road.*

I went over to see the new house we were buying in Esthwaite Dale on 28th March and this and other events of the time are recorded in my grandfather's diary.

- 28.3 Iris takes children out to Field Head. She walked to Tarn Hows and back to Windermere by ferry to Bowness  
 29.3 V[iolet] and Iris and children go to cinema at Bowness – ‘Knock on Wood’  
 30.3 Alan fishing  
 31.3 V went to Kendal with Alan and came back with 2 hamsters for Fiona’s birthday  
 1.4 Fiona’s birthday v .pleased with her 2 hamsters – Iris took children on picnic  
 2.4 Alan’s term report came. 1<sup>st</sup> in form in classics Iris and V. with children go to Bowness for film ‘Belles of St Trinians’

A letter written by Iris on 3rd April describes my sister’s birthday and further impressions.

*We’ve had a very satisfactory week as far as weather is concerned, especially Fiona’s birthday which was perfect – fortunately as we’d arranged an all-day picnic. I went into Kendal the day before and bought her a couple of hamsters, small cream-coloured animals rather like guinea pigs and rather sweet, she has called them Bubble and Squeak and seems pleased with them. Alan and Anne gave her a bird book and Mummy a jewel-box (not new!). Richard a Bible and Jean 10/- so she did very well. We collected two other girls and a boy and took lunch (I took it!) to a small tarn not far away, actually it was a goodish step, it took us an hour to walk there but the bright spring weather and the fields full of lambs were enchanting. We ate lunch and the boys fished and we played tracking games and got back to Windermere at quarter to 5 to find that a fishing rod had been left behind so the wretched boys had to go back and get it. Altogether a lovely day, although my wretched chilblains made my feet very sore. I have them on the soles and walking on them isn’t much fun. Still I’ve done more walking this week than I’ve done for years as the children are full of enthusiasm for exploring and we’ve had several fine days running. One day, Monday, we took a picnic to the new house, and then walked up behind it and on and on, finally landed up at the Tarns at 3 p.m and were told it was at least 3 miles to Hawkshead where the last bus left at 4. As we were all exhausted by then it was a formidable prospect but we made it with a minute to spare. The children were very game and full of fun and it was another lovely day. The air here is so wonderful it makes you want to walk for miles, but the flesh is weak, mine anyway. Alan has been doing some fishing between-whiles but without success, the weather is still too cold I think as very few have been caught. I hope he gets a bite before his enthusiasm wears off. His school report has come and is very good, 1<sup>st</sup> in Classics! This, he says isn’t really up to much as it’s an un-brainy set, but he seems to be doing well all round... They all three look so much better after a week of holidays, fatter and pinker and colds gone, though I’ve been battling against one this week... Fiona now weighs 5 st 12 lbs and Anne not much less. Alan doesn’t seem to alter at all!*

*Darling ...I do hope you aren’t going to find life here too different and strange – I have so many fears mixed up with my feelings about you, and am terrified you’ll be disappointed in your leave and this place – and me! No doubt unfounded, I hope so, I can’t imagine that you will be able to withstand the impact of England in April even if all else fails. We went for a walk to the lake this afternoon and picked a bunch of wild daffodils and watched a man fishing, it was so glittering and peaceful, the peace is what appeals to me most, I feel I can’t get enough of it.*

The final letter before my father arrived was written on 7 April.

*This week the weather has let us down and been unremittingly grey and drizzly, so we haven’t been on any more expeditions, but the children have been very cheerful though the house is so cluttered with straw, plaster, comics and hamster droppings that I can hardly bear to look round. Alan has fished several times but without a bite and is getting rather discouraged, do hope he’ll catch a minnow or something soon ... They all look so well and rested, I’m quite loath to let them go back. I don’t feel too exhausted either, the only chore I really hate is shopping, we seem to get through such mounds of food I’m for ever trailing round with laden shopping baskets and over Easter with all the shops shutting for days and days, it has become too hectic for words. They descend on the table like locusts 4 times a day, and Anne is at my heels when I’m cooking to lick all available saucepans, but of course I wouldn’t have it otherwise.... Glad the fishing was fun if not successful, the trouble with Alan is that he hasn’t really the right tackle and spends his time getting into mad tangles and losing spoons*

*and flies and getting enraged. We went out this afternoon to a very promising Beck and fished every inch of it with worm and fly, but I fancy it's still too cold. The wild daffodils are coming out and there are masses of them everywhere. Fiona is full of enthusiasm for her bird-watching and has found several nests, I hope it'll last.*

Among the themes to emerge from this account we can notice the growing, if unrequited, passion for fishing, the attitude to girls as 'fleb', the hobbies centering on electric trains and detective fiction. I was still a prep school boy, smaller than my sister (two years younger than myself), starting to delight in our northern home, and on the edge of puberty.

## A Home in the Lakes

The difficulty of buying a first home is familiar to many, but that it should have occurred when my grandparents were around sixty, and my father almost forty, is interesting.

First details of a possible purchase come in a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1955.

*Everything is in a state of flux here, as Mummy and Daddy are looking for somewhere to go and a few days ago we went to look at a house for sale near the house I stayed in when I first came here. It is only half a house, in the most perfect situation, overlooking fields and hills and lakes and next door to a farm and riding stables – isolated but not far from the bus stop... Don't know what will become of these negotiations but of course I would like to get the first house, and buy it off my people, it would be wonderful to have somewhere of our own but I'm not really hoping too much. Let me know what you think.*

My mother then reverted to the more humdrum but anxiety-making details of daily expenditure, which are worth including as a background at this time. She wrote that:

*bank wrote and said I had £173 and surely this would do for school bills, it will just but leaves nothing over. I know you must feel I'm simply absorbing money, but Christmas and school bills coming so soon on top of the house and move, coming on top of the new uniforms has given me no time to catch up. I do think Grindlays are a rotten lot, I think we should change to Lloyds. I haven't yet paid any school bills, just isn't there as I've had such large local bills this month – of course I'm not out of money but will be when I do pay the bills. This finance business worries me sick, because I just don't know how to economise any more, it isn't paying me to have my people, they drink pints and pints of milk and have lots of hot baths etc., but I can't really grudge it them. This worry over money is the only fly in my ointment, I have a drawer full of bills for electricity, coal, drink, Calor Gas etc., and spend my time wondering which I can leave over – what a depressing letter! Now I'm wondering how to buy a house! Have we got any commission left, and how are you going to get anything home for our leave if I spend it all. There won't be any more school bills till you come which is something. I have written a story this week, but as I haven't got a typewriter that doesn't help much. Oh darling I do hate wasting all my letters in this dreary way but it is my main preoccupation.*

The next letter, dated on 26<sup>th</sup> January, returns to the question of buying the house.

*This is really a business letter because we are getting involved with this house business and I want your permission to go ahead. The house we want to get is half of a big house, in the most divine position – quite near Borwick Fold where I stayed when I first came to Ambleside. It is part of a farm, a riding stables, and has been done up from top to bottom – quite perfect for the children as its surrounded by fields and hills and there's a small lake about a mile away and of course Windermere about 3 miles away.*

*The owner wants £3,700 for it but might take a bit less – the point is that a building society aren't keen to lend Daddy the money because of his age, but wouldn't hesitate with us – we went to see a lawyer to-day and he was fairly certain we'd get a loan (presuming the society thought the house a sound proposition). We could get a 20-year loan, or a 10-year one, the latter would mean about £360 a year he thought. I know that's a lot of money darling – but you must offset it against what we would have to pay for holiday homes and travelling expenses for the children – and places to rent for our leaves – and this way we would at least have a house at the end of it. And I am sure that I can make something out of my writing once I get started. I would sit up burning any amount of midnight oil if I felt it would get me this house.*

*It is such a wonderful place for the children to grow up in, I would have no qualms about leaving them there – as it is I worry constantly about what we shall do with them and where they will leave their bicycles and airguns and electric trains. I know it's a gamble and that we can't afford it – but we've always gambled – from getting married onwards – and a few good commissions would see the whole thing paid off. I spoke to the lawyer about Income tax and he called his expert in who said as long as you were domiciled abroad you wouldn't have to pay double tax. He is looking into that carefully anyway, and of course the house will have to*

*be surveyed to see that it's really sound, otherwise the Building society won't play. There is no question of paying anything till November when we give up this place, my people will do the instalments till then – they'll also furnish it as they have practically enough stuff already.*

*Of course there are snags about the house – being semi-detached is one – but a big tall hedge will probably solve that. Anyway if you feel it doesn't give you enough scope when you retire we could sell it – but meanwhile it would solve all our difficulties. What do you think darling? I do hope you will agree. I've put you in a bit of a fix I know but I swear I'll make some money and help pay for it. This letter coming after my last one moaning about no money will send you demented I expect, but cheer up pet, it won't cost us anything till our next commission comes in and you said it would be a bumper one. Of course if the Building Society doesn't agree to help us well that's that!*

The parallel account in my grandfather's diary mirrors these first decisions. He wrote in January:

Saturday 22: Went to see Field Head House at Outgate

Monday 24: Iris goes to see house – Field Head

Wednesday 26: Saw Handley the solicitor re house

Friday 28: Rang up RDC [Rural district Council] Ulverston

Saturday 29: Wrote to Owen and sent him application form to complete for advance to purchase house.

Throughout the following negotiations my grandfather kept quite detailed entries in his diary which suddenly leaps to life from March 1955 as if he was rejuvenated by the prospective purchase. The story could be told through these, but I shall follow it in the words of my mother's letters to my father which are more personal.

At this crucial juncture, the postal service between the Lakes and Assam becomes fragile and my mother was not certain about what was getting through to my father. She therefore writes on 1<sup>st</sup> February:

*I was so glad to hear that mine were arriving, but you obviously missed one or two, as I'd explained in detail the house we nearly got at High Wray – rented. Hope you have got my letter about the one we want to buy and that you will be as keen on the idea as we are – nothing more has happened about it yet, the Rural District Council who we hope will give us a loan, and will do something soon we hope. They are better than a building society as they don't demand any security except the house itself. It will be a godsend for my people to have this house as they've used all their capital and are in a very uncertain state and we can pay for it out of our Overseas Allowance alone, until such time as we can put down any lump sum.*

Then she turns to the problem of recurrent costs.

*While we're on the subject, I'd be grateful for some money this month please darling - I haven't been able to pay Alan's school bill yet. If you could send me £100 this month for that, and £100 next month to clear up bills, I can carry on till you come on that. As you noticed, we didn't seem to get any Overseas Allowance in December, haven't had January's statement yet. Don't get into a panic about leave, darling, we can always go and help in one of the local pubs if we're too utterly broke! I hope our financial straits aren't going to prejudice you against the house, because we don't have to start paying for that till after our leave. If you were here I would be wagging my little finger like mad. I want this so very much darling.*

My father clearly received one or more of these letters and to my mother's great relief replied positively – using the expensive but safe message of a telegram. So my mother wrote on 6<sup>th</sup> February.

*Got your wire yesterday, and was very relieved – it is very sweet of you darling, but I promise I will do my bit and I'm sure we shall manage alright. The form has been sent off to the rural district council and now we have*



*to contain ourselves in as much patience as we can muster and wait for their verdict. We shall probably not get their support and will be back where we started from. The trouble now is to stop Mummy from ordering Dunlopillo mattresses and drawing-room suites ad. Lib – she has ideas far beyond any of our stations – but in fact there is very little needed and I hope I'll be able to curb her enthusiasm. Until we hear definitely from the Council we can do nothing anyway. I do hope you will like the house darling it's not a bit the sort of place I ever visualised having, but what peace! Just fields in front and hills behind – but a nice pub called "The Drunken Duck" nice and handy for you! The children should be very happy there in an unsophisticated way which is after all the best. But I mustn't dream too hard, I expect they'll crash round my ears again.*

The same letter also contained further disturbing recurrent accounts (which show that my sisters' school fees had risen from £40 a term to £50 each, just over half mine at the Dragon), which my mother tried to explain to my father thus.

*I enclose the account. The large bills are due to Christmas and the cheques I cashed were socks, hankies, gloves, tuck and pocket-money for school, and rail fares of course. I have since paid the girls school fees (£100) and so things are a bit tricky – having horrid threats that my electricity will be cut off! Still no Overseas Allowance, it would be handy to pay the rent. Won't start bleating as I expect you have sent some money but most of it will go on Alan's school fees I expect I still have quite a few bills outstanding. Once I've got straight I really shan't need any more! Anne had some story that you had bought a horse(s). Can this be true?! Can't believe it, just before your leave – though I'm sure you deserve a decent horse darling. Oh bother this money business, it is the one big fly in my ointment – but one thing is that we shall never have a more expensive time than this, so if we can keep our heads above water now we shall reach the shore, I hope! Oh darling what miserable letters but I am rather worried as the bank is so unhelpful! But only one more whole month without you, and after that nothing will really matter and we can starve quite happily as long as we're together!*

One minor anxiety at this time was the continued enthusiasm with which my grandmother took the hunting for furniture for a house which was far from purchased. My mother wrote on 12<sup>th</sup> February:

*No more news of the house, but Mummy went to a sale on Thursday to "have a look" and came back with everything in the sale including a bicycle! Not literally, but they are to follow. I can't imagine what happens if the house falls through. It is with great difficulty we've dissuaded her from rushing off to other sales this last few days, have awful visions of humping kitchen dressers and rocking chairs round for ever and ever! Actually the things she bought were terribly cheap, the chairs 2/- each! Even as firewood they'd be a bargain!*

Six days later on 18<sup>th</sup> February days the house purchase was still on the top of my mother's mind and she tried to reassure my father as to the quality of the property.

*The house business doesn't progress, in fact the Rural dist. Council doesn't discuss it until March 17<sup>th</sup> so we're all feeling a bit on edge, wondering what they'll decide and what we shall do if they say no. Mr Owen says he'll wait till then before putting it into the market, but it doesn't leave us much time to make other decisions – Building Societies take even longer to get cracking. ... Anyway we'll have to see what happens.*

The only other note here suggests that my father had arranged for a further overdraft, or sent more money, for my mother writes *Thank you for arranging about the money darling. Sorry to have got so hysterical about it.*

On about 3<sup>rd</sup> of March things started to move on. My mother wrote:

*We've just heard that the committee which sat yesterday has recommended our petition to the Council, so that's one hurdle over. I think we shall have to beat the old man down a bit though, he is asking far too much – but it is the sort of place that somebody might come along and see and be prepared to slap down the money for, just on the situation and the fact that it is National Trust Property and can't be spoiled – there is really no way to*

*value a place like that. Still we shall have to be a little reluctant and not show him how frantic we are. If we get the Building Society loan, it will be bought in Daddy's name so there'll be no question of Income Tax or anything for us. The Bank Rate would have to go up just now.*

The following week on 11<sup>th</sup> March there is one of several allusions to an 'Overseas Allowance' which had been earlier mentioned as not being paid in January. How much this was, and whether it was a new arrangement (I can find no references to it in previous years) I do not know. My mother wrote *You don't mention why there has been no Overseas Allowance lately, I was reckoning to pay the rent out of that. Anyway I've written to the bank and said you will clear up the overdraft when you return, as I say we can always get a job to tide us over sticky patches. That commission will certainly come in handy!*

The following week on 19<sup>th</sup> March my grandmother was still whizzing around buying furniture, and my mother also bewailed the cost of fishing tackle.

*Mummy has gone quite mad over buying furniture and has about three times too much, she prances off to every sale and sees a much nicer bed or sofa than she got last time and the result is that today we have 3 sofas and about 30 chairs – at the last sale she met some people she knew in Pindi [Rawalpindi, India] and brought them back to tea, wasn't it strange... As for buying us new rods and reels – a multiplying reel alone is £3. I thought of getting Alan one for Xmas and was shattered.*

A week later, in a letter of 27<sup>th</sup>, the matter of the house is still in the air.

*The house business isn't quite settled, the surveyor has to look at it and value it, and then we shall make a definite and final offer, - should be sometime this week I think, it is hard to get the wheels of local government moving, but the Dist. Council have been very good and helpful so far. Do hope you are going to be pleased with the house, my worry is that you will be disappointed but I think time and the growing of hedges will improve it a lot, its in rather a raw state at present.*

Two weeks later my mother is panicking about the whole decision and the huge sums involved.

*The whole thing is becoming a bit of a nightmare, as with all this delay and time to think it over we are getting cold feet over the house. I wake up in the night sweating at the thought of all the money involved when none of us have a bean – but somehow I think we shall pull it off. We can't ever get as close as this again I feel, and the owner has been most patient while we make up our minds. The surveyor has been out to see it, and we should definitely get a decision this week as to exactly how much the council will give us. I think the present idea is that we go straight into it, more or less picnicking, and M and D stay on here. Anyway I should be able to let you know definitely by next week...*

In the same letter, shortly before the arrival of my father, my mother admitted that she could not make ends meet and again expressed her aversion to arguing about money. She wrote

*Next week we have a couple of tea parties and a visit to the dentist which is a bore, shall also have to get a few summer clothes for the girls. Won't discuss finance, but I'm afraid I'm running up an overdraft again, just can't seem to help it but we'll have to thrash it out when you arrive. Not the first evening though, we'll keep that separate and unworldly, we won't think or talk about money – just for those few hours will we?*

Fortunately the final agreement on the house occurred just before my father returned, so my mother gives the details in a letter of 7<sup>th</sup> April.

*The house business is settled at last, we have had to give £3.550 without the garage, he wouldn't take a penny*

*less and we felt we couldn't wait about waiting to see if anyone else would offer as much and possibly lose it after all. The surveyor only valued it at £3,000 so we know we are paying too much, but we want it so badly we aren't risk someone else snapping it up. The council are paying £2,700 and M and D are filling the gap by means of an enormous overdraft, which we will pay back as soon as we can to them – perhaps £400 when our half commission arrives and the other £400 when the rest comes? They will then pay the instalments on the house till the end of the year, which will now only be £10 a month. All very complicated, but I can't think of any other way we could have bought a house can you, and its really Jolly d. of the Council to be so helpful I think. Hope you aren't too overwhelmed by all this darling. I'm afraid we'll have to have a quiet leave, but it should be fun all the same.*

On this same day my grandfather ended his parallel account of the purchase with a detailed summary in his diary as follows. 'Letter from RDC Ulverston saying house valued at £3000 and they will give me £2700 advance. Phoned Handley who told me how to write to Owen when sending 10 per cent deposit. Wrote to Owen saying we will buy house for £3500. Phoned Mrs Owen and asked her to ask Owen to have house ready for us. Wrote to Bank thanking for allowing £400 overdraft.' The following day, Good Friday, he noted 'Owen rang up acknowledging my letter and cheque and says I cannot go into house till contract signed. He will however write to his solicitor to expedite.' Appropriately my grandfather was soaking himself in the atmosphere, reading "Wordsworthshire" by Eric Robertson and 'Companion into Lakeland" by Maxwell Fraser.

There is finally a sheet in my grandfather's hand headed 'Field Head' which summarises all the expenses incurred in buying the new house. This is as follows:

*Furniture* etc. Carpet £38 10s ; Furniture £127 2s; From Broadstone £30; Furniture Transport £3 12s 6d; Total £199 4s 6d

Bank charges on 1<sup>st</sup> overdraft: £16.

Paid by Mac: £250 on 31<sup>st</sup>

*Field Head*: Surveyor £10 10s; Ten percent [down payment] £355; Insurance £3 18s 9d;

Frank Jackson (percent from May-July?) £38 12 0; Frank Jackson £495; Hart Jackson £97 5s; Total £1000 5s 9d.

Lawyer (paid by Mac) £60 3s

R.D.C [Rural District Council] Aug 19<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> £4 1s 9d; September £16 16s 4d

Thus the expenses of furniture was about £200 and costs associated with the house purchase, including a ten percent payment, about £1000.

\*

The worries about being able to afford to buy a house are part of a general theme during these years, which is a shortage of money. My education, in particular, was expensive, equal to that of both my sisters, and even on a tea planter's salary, my parents always seemed to be hard up. This led to my mother attempting to earn some money.

There were two possibilities as she saw it. One was through her writing. From her late teens she had been convinced that one day she would be a published author and this dream finally did come true – but not until the 1960's. Before that she made various attempts to find enough time and energy to write, and alluded to this possibility on a number of occasions. These attempts and hopes are mentioned in her letters through this period.

The first occasion is a dispiriting reference in a letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 1948 when she wrote *I'm feeling a little depressed as I sent some verses up to a paper called "Good Housekeeping" and they returned them to-day saying they didn't want them. And if they won't publish my rubbish, who will? I'm afraid I'm going to be a wash-out in every direction darling, but please don't stop loving me.'*

She does not seem to have pursued this during the year when she was coping alone in Pinecot, Broadstone, but as the extra expenses of moving house and later of trying to buy a

house occurred towards the end of 1954 she reverted to the theme. On 26th September she wrote

*When I'm on my own I shall definitely take a job and also try to do a bit of writing and I'm sure will be able to make some money.*

She remained hopeful as the new year arrived and on 26<sup>th</sup> January wrote *I am sure that I can make something out of my writing once I get started. I would sit up burning any amount of midnight oil if I felt it would get me this house.* Then on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1955 she wrote further that *I've hired a typewriter for a week to type my masterpieces, so hope you don't mind this, I always have to pay double on your letters these days anyway!*

From these scraps, and her surviving papers, it is clear that she was writing bits and pieces, but felt that without the typewriter to convert them into something she could send to publishers she was thwarted. It was really only when she was on her own in Assam after leaving the children at school at the end of 1955 that her writing took off. Before then much of her energy and her art went into her letters to my father and to us.

My mother did make at least one effort to try to get a paid job. Her account of the venture captures much of what made her almost unemployable, yet very endearing. It is described in a letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 1954 and describes the attempt of a thirty-two year old middle class lady with a limp to find employment in the Lake District at that time.

*This afternoon I had an amusing time, I went out to apply for a job! A woman on a bus was telling me about a job she'd got at an Orphanage near Ambleside, so I went along to see if they'd got anything part-time for me – was intending to talk very fast about “teaching experience” and “knowledge of dressmaking”. When I got out of the bus a middle-aged man came up to me and said did I know the way to the orphanage. I pointed to a large house and said I thought that was it and I was going there myself to look for a job. He said “So am I. What are you going to do?” I said “I've no idea, what are you?” and he said anything at all, last time he was a butler, but he had 3 children to educate and had to do something to which I said “Me too” and we went up the drive hand-in-hand. A very smooth man ushered us in and took me into a private room and asked me what sort of job I had in mind, at which I came out with my patter about being fond of children and teaching experience. He looked surprised and said “Yes, quite” and I said “This is an Orphanage you're starting isn't it” and he said “No it's a factory for making woollen garments”! Well, I was a bit taken aback, but couldn't drop through a hole in the floor unfortunately, so started telling him I could type at which he looked relieved but of course when I told him I could only work 3 mornings and break off for the holidays etc. he wasn't very hopeful but very kindly wrote my name on a piece of paper and said he'd let me know if anything cropped up. He ushered me out very politely saying “thank you for coming Mrs Macfarlane” and I answered “Oh that's alright!” very condescendingly as if I'd done him an enormous favour! I laughed all the way back in the bus, I never waited to hear how my friend who'd been a butler got on. Can't see myself being employed darling, but I shall try and find out what sort of job I'm applying for next time!*

My mother's accounts of my grandfather, then aged around sixty, a retired army officer with numerous medals for bravery, and his attempt to get a job is shorter but also amusing. My mother writes on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1954 *Daddy applied for a job as “Driver, handyman” to some elderly lady, and had just about landed the job when Mummy arrived and firmly squashed the whole plan, declaring that he was neither – quite rightly but poor Daddy was heartbroken. He is sadly in need of something to do, as he has no hobby, except football pools and can't seem to even read a book.*

My grandfather's diary shows that he did not give up the effort straight away. On 7<sup>th</sup> March 1955 he records ‘Went to National Trust Office Ambleside to ask for job No luck’. Then on 2<sup>nd</sup> April he tried once more. ‘Went to WH Smith and asked for Librarians job advertised in Westmorland Gazette. He wants female.’

In fact, it was only my grandmother who briefly found a job as waitress and cleaner at a neighbouring hotel for a few months. Her tenacity is shown by the account in my grandfather's diaries. She applied for the job at the Ravenscroft hotel (just by our house) on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1955 and started work on 13<sup>th</sup>. The diary shows that she worked seven days a week, from 7.30-2.30 each day, with an occasional extra session from 6.15 in the evening. She worked without a break until 11<sup>th</sup> September, just before she and my grandfather moved to Hawkshead to look after the house they had jointly bought with my parents. I still remember her delight when an unexpectedly large tip was left for her.

\*

After they bought a house, I expected them to be somewhat less worried about money. Yet now that I read through the Lakeland era letters I see that they were just as worried during the Sedbergh years, if not more so. They seemed to be hanging on the edge of a cliff. There are particularly strong anxieties about the consequence of having the three of us children out to India at Christmas 1958.

There are frequent references to the fact that this will set my parents back for years, their attempts at saving by giving up drinks, smoking, the club and so on. One new thing about the situation are that my mother occasionally shared her worries with me – or at least tells me that they are very short of money in order to explain why they can't afford to pay for a hiking trip on the continent – until my headmaster offers to do so – or to buy me a motorbike or guitar.

The second novelty is that I begin actively to participate in economic decisions. I do this especially around my hobbies – fishing, the guitar and travel (motorbike). I write quite a lot about my ideas of how to raise small sums of money in order to buy something. I appear not to be too demanding or unrealistic and to consult in a moderately careful way with my parents (and since they also lent me money, my grandparents also) about my purchases.

From about the age of sixteen onwards I talk about getting holiday jobs, but do not seem ever to have done so until I left Sedbergh, when I worked over the summer on a Norwegian cargo boat and in a bakery. This was to save money to buy a small sailing dinghy. On the whole my parents gave me all I needed in the way of pocket money, so I was very fortunate.

Our boarding schools, and especially Sedbergh, must have been a huge drain. My parents envisaged the possibility of sending my sisters to a grammar school when their school was talking of closing down, but they never seem to have contemplated taking me out of Sedbergh and sending me to a free local school. Was their pride, or pretension, or the strong desire to give a wonderful start on the life which they had always dreamt for me behind this? A part of each, I suppose, but above all the last motive.

What strikes me is how little back-up or support there was in the way of credit. The Assam Company seemed reluctant to lend money and in any case there was a strict limit of £150 per month that could be sent home from India. In England the banks had given a loan for the purchase of the house, but any further attempts to borrow were refused on the grounds that the bank could not be certain of assets and debts in India. There were no thoughts of borrowing money from my uncles or any other kin, or from any friends. The only people from whom, in effect, my parents could borrow was from my grandparents – in the form of asking them to hold off a repayment for our costs or to buy something “on account” for us. This slightly eased my parents' position, but the borrowing had to be repaid quite rapidly as my grandparents themselves were in a difficult position. They were in such straits that my grandfather was actively discussing cashing in his major life insurance policy to raise money.

My own accounts and discussions of small sums of money for guitars, motorbikes and so on show that I had a reasonable grasp of basic domestic economics, but also that while I did not feel embarrassed by money (as my father did), nor did I find it particularly interesting. I was never a great hoarder, but nor did I get into serious debt. If I had money I would tend to

spend it when I wanted something, but from sixteen onwards I clearly had a bank account (Martin's Bank at Ambleside).

## The place and the people

The Field Head house and its surroundings are best captured again in a number of vignettes.

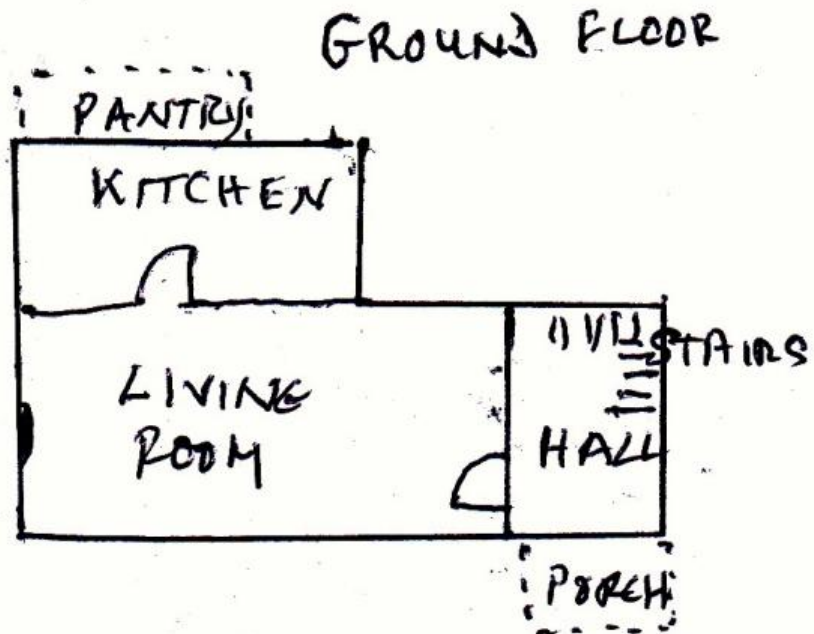
My mother described the house and surroundings to my father briefly in a letter of 18th February 1955, as follows:

*The house may disappoint you, in itself it isn't very wonderful, it is part of a long building which has been divided into two, some people called Wright have the other half, and the barn on the left made into a bungalow for the owner. But apart from the farm behind there are no other houses near and the view in front, behind and all round is wonderful. There is about half an acre of garden behind, lawn, veg and rockery, and then fields. It has all been done up recently and has electricity, Aga Cooker, Stainless steel sink, nice modern bathroom, water from mains – very handy and clean. There are 3 bedrooms, two big ones and a small oak bedroom with uneven floors – there are oak beams in the drawing room and window-seats in the low windows and its really very nice. Not the cosy, cottagey sort of house I'd imagined, a plain, thick-walled stone house which would stand up to anything. The "Drunken Duck" has its own tarn full of rainbow trout close by and there is free fishing in the becks and lakes and I should think shooting though I haven't looked into that.*

Let me flesh this out a little with the help of some memory maps and photographs. The house was a later seventeenth century farm house, which looked from the front and the back like this. As can be seen it was made of stone and slate. The long house had additions at the back on each end, and was divided by our time into two dwellings.



As I recall it, the downstairs plan was as follows.

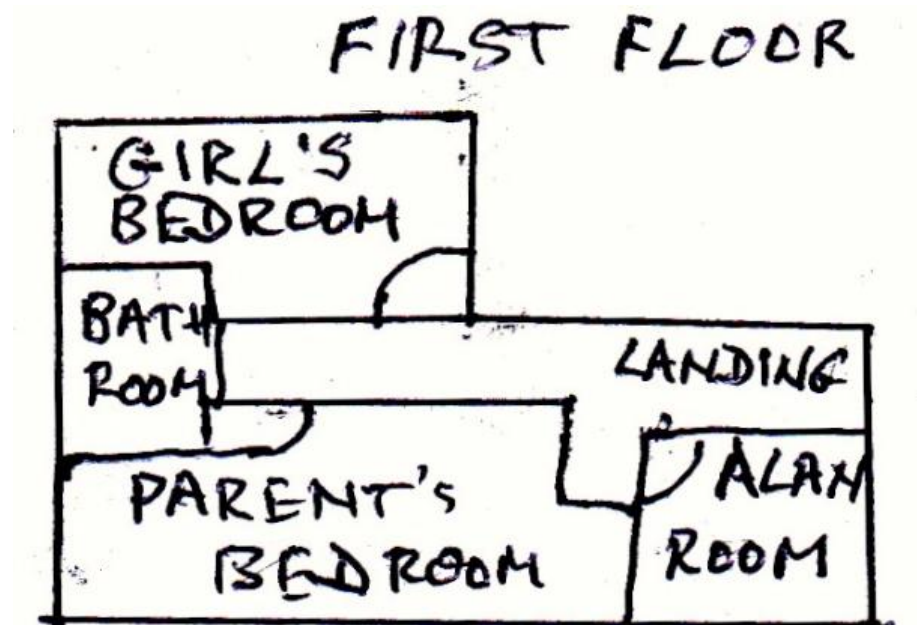


You entered by a stone and slate porch, where boots and in the summer fishing rods were kept. The hall was very dark and thin, with a narrow table running down it. Later a downstairs water closet was built, perhaps under the stairs at the far end. The long thin living room opened off on the left, with window seats and a fire at the far end. The only interior picture I have is of my mother sitting by the fire-place.



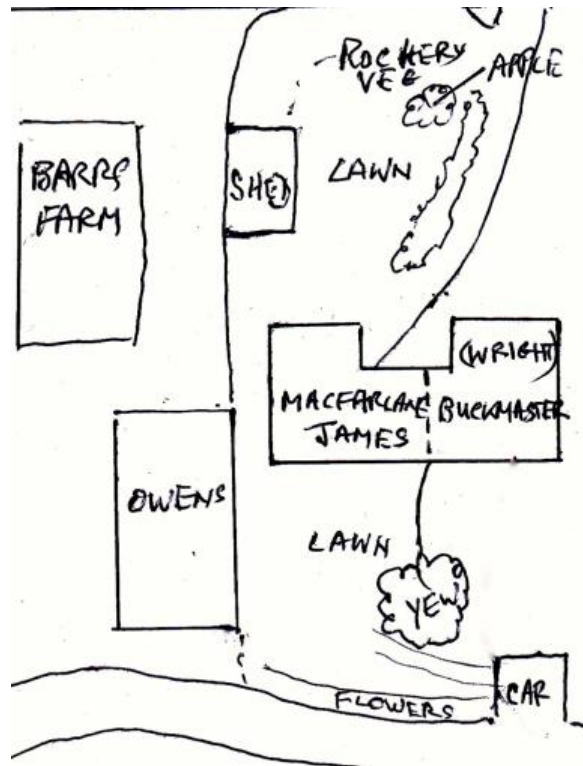


A big, stone-floored, kitchen opened off the living room with a large table in the centre where we ate meals, and a large coke-fired Aga against the back wall. It was the warmest room in the house. Off it opened a small pantry filled with bottles of jam and other fruit.



Climbing up the turning wooden stairs one reached quite a large landing with a cupboard against the wall and, if needed for visitors, a space for a narrow bed. Off this opened my room – with an oak floor and oak wall between this room and my parents' (or grandparents') bedroom. My sisters' bedroom and the bathroom were at the end.

The next layer of our world was the garden.



My mother gardening in the corner by the shed

Coming up from the space for parking the car underneath the very old yew tree and past the flower bed, there was a lawn which was really too small for games. On one side were the Owen neighbours and a way through to the back garden led past the coal store. The garden shed, which was through the years to become a special place where I stored things and later worked, was against the wall dividing us from the farming family, the Barrs. A hedge went along shielding a path – perhaps there because there was in fact a right of way through the garden to the back fields, though fortunately hardly anyone used it. The ground rose at the back with a rockery and some vegetable beds. The apple tree was large and prolific, but I am not certain I have located it absolutely right.



Field Head and the back garden with shed



The house from the back gate, which opened out onto the meadows and fells.

The next layer of our world was the country within about five miles, in other words the distance we could walk to explore or fish. (Elterwater at the top right about five miles from Field Head, to give the scale.)



This is an old, nineteenth century map, and does not show some of the features of the landscape as I knew it. For example, the Drunken Duck Inn and tarn is not shown, where we used to go for fishing and following the hounds, nor is High Grassings, the home of the Knappets where our first party was held. The daily walk tended to be to Juniper Hill, about half a mile behind the house, and we roamed easily as far as the bottom of Esthwaite Water and to Tarn Hows.

Ambleside was about five miles by bus and just within walking distance. Further away, beyond Elterwater was the Duddon Valley where we swam and fished, and beyond that the Cumbrian sea coast. Across Lake Windermere, more or less on a level with our house, was the town of Windermere. From that town to the school in Sedbergh I would go to in September 1955 was about twenty miles.



A family picnic by the sea-side in 1960

\*

To a large extent the central core of my family continued as before in Dorset but there were also differences. My uncle Robert became much less important after he married, which was in my first year at Sedbergh. His enthusiasm and inspiration as he pursued his very successful career, first as a writer and Clerk in the House of Commons, and later in international affairs and as a Member of Parliament, were a background factor. But we no longer played together which had been such a central part of the effervescence of Dorset holidays.

In the Lakeland holidays, it was my uncle Richard who now spent more time with me, often coming on holiday for a week or two from his school-mastering job at Haileybury. On one occasion he took me for a holiday to Wastewater, and we often went for long walks together. He was also an officer at the religious camp at Iwerne Minster where I went four times during the Lake District years. He was also an aspiring writer, like my mother, and we would discuss the writer's craft. He was always encouraging. Like Robert he had studied history at Oxford and this probably shaped both my interest history at Sedbergh and later to Oxford.

My relationship to my parents obviously changed. It was the period when I was closest to my father through a shared interest in sport and fishing and I remember him as strong and supportive, but also showing signs of bewilderment at my academic development which was moving beyond his experience.

My mother, even at a distance, continued to be the strongest influence on me, through her visits and through her letters. Around my sixteenth year, the time of our visit to Assam, she suddenly noticed that I was no longer the little boy of whom she had mildly despaired, with few friends, small and not very academic. Instead she began to communicate with me in a new way. This coincided with her finding a role in India as a teacher, learning Assamese, doing some archaeology, and starting to write seriously. So from about 1958 to the time I left home for London in 1967, we became as it were pen friends, discussing philosophy, poetry, literature, and history. We started in a fairly lopsided fashion, with my mother well ahead of me in experience and knowledge, but gradually became more equal and quite intense.

My two sisters became more important during this period. They were no longer away for periods in India (except on our joint holiday) and their school holidays coincided with mine. We formed part of 'the gang' in the Lakes and went to events together and shared an interest in pop music, walking, friends and even some aspects of books and films. Fiona's letters show that she was prepared to be critical of me and stand up for herself and also that I was part of her world, but not too central or dominant. We mostly remained friends and her energy and intelligence gave me stimulus. The easy friendship with a slightly younger girl no doubt helped me to form easy friendships with girls later in my life. Anne was younger and I remember that her interests were already diverging from those of Fiona and myself.

More distant relatives, my uncle and aunt, Billy and Julia, and other relatives of various kinds, lived either in southern England or Scotland, so I saw less of them. We certainly spent some time with Pat and Alan Cowan and Alan and Jean Macfarlane in Scotland, but I think less than when I was at the Dragon. Other family links, for example to the Mermagens, began to fade.

\*

The Lake District and Sedbergh years are when my grandparents come into focus in my memory. I remember them better for that period, just as I remember most things more clearly from about the age of fourteen. My grandmother remains in my mind as tolerant and supportive, full of zest and a love of life which continued until her death. She was highly intelligent, manipulative, energetic and full of plans. She was harder with my sisters, especially Fiona, whose tough character matched her own. She liked boys and after a succession of three sons, one of whom had only recently really left home, I must have been almost like a youngest son – perhaps the Monty who had died young. She lent me money, allowed my friends to invade the house, sorted out my school things, and arranged my holidays, always with great efficiency and flexibility.

As my mother frequently reported in her letters to my grandparents – and I don't think she was just being flattering – we seemed very happy at home. I do indeed remember the holidays in the Lake District as mostly delightful. My grandmother was an excellent cook and never stinted on food. Meals were large social occasions and the smell of marmalade-making or roasting chickens are still in the back of my mind. My grandfather was still gardening, though at less of a pace, so we had masses of fruit – raspberries, strawberries, apples and plums, and a large variety of vegetables. With a farm next door, we were never short of eggs, milk and meat. Occasionally I even caught a fish that was large enough to eat.

The house was solid and snug and we all had our private spaces. My grandmother let me turn my little oak-timbered room into whatever I liked. She did not complain when I put planks on bricks along the walls and piled tomato boxes on them. In these I accumulated papers, the start of my filing system which is the basis of this account. I suspect that she rather approved – she was a great hoarder of paper and oddments, and I probably partly learnt this from her.

My grandmother encouraged all my interests, fishing, walking and skiffle. She found me my first motorbike and never put up any objections to this potentially dangerous activity. She even encouraged my love life. She had been a notable magnet for handsome men in her youth – beautiful, vivacious and something of a flirt – and she loved parties and company. So when I was starting to search for girlfriends she did not stand in my way. Indeed she extolled the beauty of the 'sweetly pretty' Annette G., the daughter of a friend near Blackpool. Annette and I had a brief and chaste but pleasant flirtation which is documented in my diaries and letters. It was with Annette that I first danced cheek to cheek – at a party where my grandmother was keeping a beady eye on us and no doubt also enjoying the fun in a vicarious way.

I remember my grandfather with great affection. I have his watch from this period – which

he lost on a walk and we found much later. He was still gardening, doing the football pools, wearing old clothes. He was always gentle, considerate, helpful, interested in poetry and wrote to me when I was at school. A solid, dependable and kindly figure who was also very fond of my sisters. Even when dressed up for the annual British Legion parades, with his Military Cross, O.B.E. and other medals from his military career, he did not seem a daunting figure. Occasionally my grandmother would bully him and he could lose his temper. But mostly their relationship was now mellow and loving and a good pattern for us. Their relationship with my parents was also one of deep trust and interdependence.



My grandfather with Juno our dog.

My grandparents' love of company meant that the house always seemed to be buzzing, expanding and contracting as uncles, especially Richard who spent part of a number of holidays with us – or Robert and Angela (his girlfriend and soon to be his wife) came to stay. Many neighbours came to visit us and special occasions like birthdays and Christmas were usually celebrated with great gusto.



Angela and my uncle Robert

The enormous support and stability of my grandparents, who had looked after me intermittently since I was an infant, and particularly in Dorset when my parents were away, did much to offset the absence of my parents. My mother was clearly deeply grateful to them for all they did and repaid a little of their kindness in my grand-mother's last years, when they lived together.

\*

Neighbours at that time stand out in my mind more clearly than at the Dorset stage and many of them were important to my parents and grandparents. For example the wealthy Manzi-Fe's in a big house half a mile away, with a son of my age at Stowe school, feature quite large and somewhat dominated us. Mrs Knappet and her author daughter Rachel were frequent visitors and I particularly remember holding my first party in their house.

Other important neighbours were those who lived in the other half of our house. I don't remember much about the Wrights, but the Buckmasters, who arrived when I was about sixteen, were memorable. The father was, to us, an old buffer, though with a certain glamour as he was rumoured (wrongly) to be the legendary Second World War hero or spy of the same name. The mother, Beryl, was scatty. Their son Martin was a large, amiable boy who brought me my first semi-serious girlfriend. He was part of 'the gang' and with his drums, a car from early on, and other assets such as a coffee bar which he ran (the Walnut Coffee Bar



in Ambleside) at the end of my time in Field Head, was important.

There seems to have been few frictions with our neighbours, or with the Owens who had sold us the house and moved to a long bungalow next door. On the farm there was a local farming family called Barr, whom we saw a good deal of – their sons, Stanley, Billy, Pip and perhaps another – were companions and we went rabbiting together, they helped in our garden and came to watch our television. At my wedding, it was the Barr's horse and cart which drove us down to the church in Hawkshead.

Opposite the drive was a small house. This is where the Bells lived in the early part of our time at Field Head. They are frequently mentioned in letters as having a television before we got one, he was a retired postman. Later a Mr Haslam lived there, a sort of recluse who is described with mild horror by my mother, but who also taught my sister a little Latin. In the big house on the bend before our house a retired churchman, Canon Bradley lived with his wife.

\*

Further away in Elterwater was my friend Stephen Grieve, who had been at the Dragon School with me. Freddie Holdsworth who ran the bookshop in Ambleside, though about seven years older than us, was a fringe member of 'the gang' as he was regarded as an 'intellectual'. Anne Johnson, a lively blond, had a holiday cottage in Outgate and was a serious member of our gang and she would often bring up a nice, dark-haired friend, who became a close friend.

There was also a fellow-Luptonian (from Sedbergh School), though a couple of years older, Mike Doogan, whose father used to take me back to school and ran the Outward Bound Centre at Brathay. I also remember Steve Darbishire, already a successful musician with his 'Yum Yum' band, and our envy of his own studio apartment. He was reputed to have cut a figure in Paris and played Fats Waller numbers to my delight. Once when we played together with Martin on the drums I had a sense of what real pop music bands might be like and had dreams of forming one.

Another I remember was John Wright, who delivered groceries every week from Hawkshead and held my grandfather in high esteem for his military career. There were various shopkeepers, bank managers, doctors and dentists, but none of them figure greatly in my patterns of friendship.

The precise range of my inner circle is rather nicely revealed by a list of those I decided I should pray for at the end of my time at Sedbergh. I was on a religious retreat in York and we were being instructed in the art of prayer. So I drew up a list of those to pray for on 31 August 1960. This is the list, moving to a certain extent from the closest to further outwards.

*Organisation of Prayer over the week* - including Supplication for:

Friends. School: Ian, Geoffrey, David, Fred, Charles, Stewart, Nicky A, Alan B. Weedy Savory, Watto. Heber - Clive Bodd, those at Iwerne.

Home: David, Martin, Anne J and H. Michael, Gill, Jacky, Jo, Mike Doo[Gan]. Jill, Steve, Simon their parents.

Family: Granny, Grandpa, Mummy, Daddy, Fiona, Anne, Aunt Pat, Uncles Alan, Jean, Richard, Robert, Billy cousins etc.

It is interesting that I placed my grandparents before my parents in the list, and there were more friends at school than in the other categories. Nicky A[damson] was the one friend from the Dragon school, apart from Stephen Grieve who lived at Elterwater, with whom I was still in contact by this time.

So I moved through five years surrounded by perhaps about fifty people who counted seriously in my life and left a strong trace on me. Much of my life was lived alone – in the

mind and work, reading, fishing and listening to music. Friendships were strong and deep, but quite selective.

# **HOME LIFE**

# 1955

Before introducing some of the particular themes in my life in the Lakes, I will give a rough chronology of events and impressions based mainly on letters, and supplemented also by some diary entries.

## 1955: April to December

The previous account of life at Beck House ended on 27th April when I went back to the Dragon School for my final term.

As my father was now back in England until he and my mother went back to Assam in October, there are no letters between them, or between me and them in India until late October. I do not seem to have kept letters from my mother in my last term at the Dragon, though there are several letters from me that they kept, filled with Dragon affairs.

So the two real sources are my grandfather's and mother's diaries for 1955. My grandfather's diary covers the whole year and is the fullest of his diaries, and that of my mother is the only one I have by her (in brief pocket diary form) in these years.

From May 20th, when my parents went to live in Field Head and my grandparents remained in Beck House, until the end of September, the family was split, so most of my grandfather's diary deals with matters not directly related to the Field Head household, and the period from November to December my mother was on the voyage out to India and in Assam, so that material will be used elsewhere. These diaries are included in the full version held on the Cambridge Archive Site, DSpace, noted at the end.

Just to give a flavour of daily life, I shall just include the account of one month, May 1955, from each of their diaries.

## IRIS DIARY 1955

### May

- 3 To Kendal got skirt & jacket!
- 4 To Keswick for kilt. Dinner Fothergills
- 5 To film "High & the Mighty"
- 6 To Lyth Valley. Picked
- 7 Picnic Climbed 'Cartmel Fell'
- 8 Son to Billy & Julia. Wet day. Took kids to Grange
- 9 To see Gatey. Fishing at Rydal. Mortons
- 11 Tea Mrs Grieve.
- 12 to Ballet 6.45. Winter Gardens
- 14 Sheila arrives. Didn't. took kids to Ballet. Wet
- 16 Permission to enter. Cleaned
- 17 Furniture arrived
- 18 Cleaned in morning. Kendal afternoon.
- 19 Cleaned all day. Lit Aga.
- 20 Sports 2 p.m. Cold. Play 8.15 p.m. Slept at Field Head.
- 21 Half term. 11 Dancing display. Kids home.
- 22 Sheila arrives. Midnight. Mac to meet her 4 a.m.
- 24 To "Living Desert"
- 25 Dinner Chapmans
- 26 Election. M & D to supper here. Showed film.
- 28 Fete. Fiona German Measles. Girls played. To Races.

29 Took picnic to Tilberthwaite. Lovely day.  
30 Very hot. Cartmel Races. Very crowded.  
31 Hot.

## **GRANDFATHER'S DIARIES**

MAY

Sunday 1

Mac takes his family in Crook direction

Monday 2

Iris goes to Young Wives meeting

Tuesday 3

Mac drove me to Dr Hall who gave me some medicine for low blood pressure as feeling groggy this morning

Mac and Iris go out to Field Head

Wednesday 4

Mac and Iris go to Keswick to get Fiona's kilt

Mac and Iris go to dinner with the Fothergills

Letter from Bank saying my surrender policies are worth about £1600

Friday 6

drive with Mac round Lakes

Robert rang up saying he has received unofficial intimation that he has been successful in his interview for Clerkship of Commons. Graded A

Saturday 7

Bal at Bank £795-18-6

Mac and Iris go for dive – details

Fiona and Anne for lunch – their parents take them out for a picnic. Fiona in her Scotch Kilt

Sunday 8

Iris and Anne to church, quotes Laurie Lee etc.

Monday 9

V went to Ambleside to see Martins and her bookie

Mac and Iris went fishing at Rydal Water

[details re Arnold who is coming over from Merano]

Thursday 12

Violet taken by Mac and Iris to see Ballet at Morecambe

Saturday 14

Mac and Iris take girls to Ballet at Morecambe

Monday 16

Went to Pauls in Kendal and bought carpet for £38-16-0

Went out to Field Head with Mac Iris V and cleaned floors

Tuesday 17

Carpets look v nice in drawing room

Wednesday 18

Mac and Iris go out to Field Head to sort china and glass and take in coals

Mac and Iris to go Kendal to look at Auction things (fishing rods)

[Gap]

Monday 23

Letter from Robert to say that he has got the clerkship officially provided he gets a second at Oxford

# 1956



Fiona, Anne and Alan, with Juno

Sunday 1 Jan 1956: Richard took children to church

Monday 2 Jan: Lovely day, Whole family spent most of day with Coniston Hunt which met at Drunken Duck

Tuesday 3 Jan: Went to Elterwater and Blea Tarn with Richard and Alan; Took Steven Grieve back

Alan to Parents, 3 January 1956

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,  
I hope you had a nice Christmas. We certainly did, as the girls probably told you, we had an enormous turkey and a lovely ham and Christmas hamper. Thank you very much indeed for the money for my birthday and the*

lovely ping pong set and ping pong table which we have played with a lot, it is also useful for my electric trains and Subuteo. (By the way could you ask Daddy to draw an electric motor (how it works) because I am fiddling about making things for the electric train and I have forgotten how one works. We have been to two hunts this holidays once on boxing day to Loughrigg but after a time we lost the hunt (the last we saw of it was a dejected group of people including a siekh who was wearing an elegant jacket and suit fit for the Savoy Hotel but not the top of Luffrig, disappearing over the crest of a hill in the pouring rain) and we made our way back in the drenching rain. This was on Boxing day a few days later we went to a hunt near the Kirkstone pass and we all climbed up red screes but of course everyone went off in different directions and poor Uncle Richard spent most of his time collecting all of us and tramping over the fells (looking for me, while I was sitting in the car.) By the way I have taken up fly tying and as Steven Grieve came over to stay and he had practiced tying once or twice we were soon hard at work; actually it is not very hard to do provided you have the right materials. Those jungle moorgi and blue jay feathers are super but I am not using them yet as it would be a waste to use them while I am learning, but any more would be extremely useful. Also do you think you could look out for peacocks feathers like this and could you cut off this as the little bits make lovely fuzzy bodies. [Diagram of a peacock feather]. If by any chance you see any feathers (except off chickens) lying about could you send them, as they might be very good ones. Yesterday the whole family went to the drunken duck for the hunt and Steven and I went up to the top from the back. After a time we decided to leave the hunt and as we were making our way back up jumped a little roe deer with a white fluffy tail and it bounded away up the hillside... Lots of love, Alan

Thurs 5 Jan: Violet and children went to see film "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers"

Sat 7 Jan: Richard and Alan go to Tarn Hows with Juno [our new boxer puppy]

#### Letter from Fiona to parents, c. 7th. January 1956

My dearest Mummy & Daddy,

What do you think it actually snowed. It said on the forecast for about a week "It will snow everywhere and we got Nothing but now when the forecast said "It will Thaw we have snow.

It has been snowing most of today and from about 12 at night (I am just changing pens).

This morning Alan Anne and I will put out for the birds food a dishful of crumbs bread porridge and other things And fat for the blue-tits. We have now on our table 3. Blackbirds 5. Robins 16 sparrows and about 3 or 5 blue-tits.

After breakfast Alan & Uncle Richard went for a walk (in the car) to Little Langdales. Uncle Richard took some photos and then they came back. In the meantime Annie & I made HUGE snowballs we rolled them and collected snow then we went to the back garden and made a fort. The biggest snowball had steps to the Top and the other two. Were going to be hollowed but only managed one.

We then got wood from the wood piles and stacked them up for a fort. Then it was snowing so hard that we went in.

Alan came in and told us that Richard had got stuck and we went to push. (he had got stuck half way into the carage) But we couldn't push it in. So we got back door and front door mats and put them in front of the wheels (we got it in).

Then Alan came and made his fort. It was lunch afterwards. We had a battle we got jolly wet but I got Alan a jolly good one on the head. So he pushed me down and threw more on top of me. All the Barrs were there (Except ??? and Billy).

Yesterday (I think) we went for a walk up to Tarn Howes with U. Richard as he wanted to get some pictures. We took Juno. By the way (not Corfe lodge road) Juno is awfully clever. She can "drop it" "fetch it" heel (sometimes) come when called (unless she is with sheep or dogs) and "give paw" and of course "sit". She can also Hup or when you Hup she jumps up.

I taught her to "paw" by just lifting her paw and saying "paw" then giving her a titbit (she now does it without you saying "paw").



..... *Can you send me those bangles but please don't if it will be too expensive!*  
*Tons of love, Fiona*      xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Sun 8 Jan: Cold, All went to church - Richard and Alan to Tarns; Played "Scrabble"

Tues 10 Jan: Richard took Violet and children to Ambleside in afternoon.

Thurs 12 Jan : Richard's birthday. Gave him a pair of gloves and the children a tie; Richard and Alan go for a walk.

Mon 16 Jan: Alan spent afternoon with Steven Grieve at Elterwater;

Tues 17 Jan: Richard leaves. Alan leaves. Is taken to Sedbergh by Doogan.

4 Feb: Saw Television in Bells House

6 March: Saw Horse racing on Bells Television

27 Mar: Alan comes home for holidays

30 Mar: Family walked to church took Juno home  
Alan fetched me some Leaf mould and I planted rest of Azaleas

31 Mar: Went to Point at Whittington - Met Robert and Angela, Liz and Francis

1 Apr: Fiona's birthday; Lovely day; Took children to church

My grandfather's diary noted:

2 Apr: Lovely day; Children took lunch to Tarn Hows

Fiona to Parents, about April 2nd 1956, Field Head, [Date mark in India is 10 April, and Fiona's birthday on 1st, so this is the approximate date.]

*Dearest Mummy and Daddy,*

*Thank you both so much for your lovely letter, which was only a day late, and anyway you couldn't have got it to me on my birthday as it was Sunday. But we had lovely time. Granny went to early morning church, so she could make a lovely lunch. Granpa Alan, Annie and I went to Matins we walked down by the fields and there were some small new-born lambs, two twins went to the wrong mother and she gave them a lecture!*

*Thank you so much for the lovely suitcase... Granny and Granpa gave me a drawing block. And I have drawn the view from Alan's bedroom window and I am going to paint it (one day!)*

*For my birthday treat we went to the Whittington Point-to-Point. Daddy would of hated it, eating a picnic lunch among hundreds of others. Julia (my best friend) and I had planned to meet and we did! It was good fun. The horses were lovely...*

*Granny and Granpa and Anne and I went to the Wrights to watch the boat race on T.V. It was very excited and at one time I thought Oxford would win.*

*Wasn't it a shame about the Queen's horse Devon Loch.... Of course afterwards Anne, Juno and I played lots of horsey games about ESB (winner), Devon Loch....*

*I am glad you had a good time up the river...*

*Here I enclosed a daffodilly and a primrose, I hope they will arrive safely...*

*I am sorry this is not a very long letter...*

*There are lots of birds, and I have found a buzzard's nest up by Tarn Howes.*

*Yesterday Alan, Anne and I went for a long walk and took our lunch with us we went up to behind the Tarn Howes over the other end, there were hundreds of cars, as it was bank holiday, and it was fine.*

*Well God bless you darlings.*

*All my love as always Fiona (Fish [Fiona's nickname]) xxxxxxxx*

3 Apr: Alan gets seeds and Squeak poison

4 Apr: Robert and Angela come to stay

5 Apr: Neville comes; They go on lake in afternoon

7 Apr: Girls and Alan go rabbiting with Juno

8 Apr: Violet and girls to church in Bells and Wrights cars.

Alan to Parents: 8 Apr 1956, Field Head

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*Thank you very much for your lovely letter and also the stamps and photographs. Just lately we have had lovely weather especially over the Easter week-end. On the Monday [2nd April] after Fiona's birthday the girls and I took a sandwich lunch up to the tarns but as there were so many people we took it up on top of the hill on the other side of the tarns and there we ate our lunch with a beautiful view of the Tarns on one side and Coniston old Man on the other, it was really wonderful. ... A few days ago while I was grubbing about for caddis larvae I found some little pink eggs and they have hatched out as baby trout, and I am going to stock black beck with them. Robert and Angela and Neville Moray came to stay and the main event was a race up Esthwaite. I was Neville's cox and we won by about 30 lengths but the second race we were only about 2 lengths behind about half way along (I was Robert's cox) when Robert's oars shot out of the rowlocks and he did a somersault and as you can imagine it was rather funny but in the third race we only just lost and we would have won in another 20 yards.*

*Lots of love, Alan*

9 Apr: Violet takes girls to Kendal and sees Alan off to Manchester<sup>2</sup>

Fiona to Parents, 10 April 1956, Field Head

*My darling Mummy and Daddy*

*Hallo!*

*Now I have a nice chance to write a nice long letter - I will try and do so.*

*Alan has written out a long list of what he is going to write and I am not allowed to copy him, so I will have to think of lots of new news!*

*Well one thing is that Alan found some pink eggs and he brought a few back and they have hatched out baby trouts (or maybe trout!) and he gave me the few which he thought had gone bad and they hatched and that squished him. In the shed there are hundreds of Jars and blocks of wood. You see you put the shallow dish with the young trout in, on one brick, and a big jar on two bricks just above it. Then you put a piece of special cloth in the big jar down to the small one and it drips down and the same thing down to another jar below. So it gives running water. I hope you can understand all that! Anyway there are lots of empty jars and lots of dirty water.*

*I have been out bird-watching, and love it...*

*Robert and Angela have been staying here for a couple of days and Neville Moray, Robert's friend.*

*Cannon Bradly has allowed us to go down to his house and pick daffodillies because we don't want to pick ours*

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<sup>2</sup> Where I was met and escorted down to Iwerne Minster VPS camp

*as we have not many although at the front there are quite a few. In the photoes you can see them, please send as many as you can. I am going to write smaller writing now so I wont take so much paper.*

*I am sorry but I forgot to put those flow...*

*It has been wonderfull until Robert came to stay and the weather changed and it has been pretty miserable.*

*Just now Alan and Anne are making a race course for our dinky race cars we have two each mine are the H.W.M. and the ferrari.*

*The Lambs are lovely the only nice stage in the sheep...*

*It is awfull as I have got to get a Tennis Raqat, so I suppose I shall have to ask Granny but I hate asking her for things,*

*God bless you darlings.*

*Your everloving daughter Fiona (Fish) P.S. Send my love to Candy and Dinah xxxxxxxxxxxxxx*

16 Apr: Telephones put in about this date

17 Apr: Richard arrives with Alan [from Iwerne Minster]

18 Apr: Richard and Alan climb High Craggs; Richard climbs Arnsfell

Iris to Alan, Cherideo, 20th April 1956

*My dear Alan,*

*Thank you for the long letter from Field Head, I've rather lost track of movements now but I hope this will catch up with you - sorry about the typewriter, it has just about given up but Daddy is too busy to be bothered with requests for another ribbon just now.*

*We were amused to hear about the trout eggs, I wonder if they survived long enough to go into Black Beck. Roger Werner<sup>3</sup> has very kindly given you his copy of "The Crabtrees go Fishing" which is the book I was trying to get at home, so I'll send it off with a rather amusing book I pinched from the library called "Calling All Fly Fishers". Have your Fishing Gazettes come yet? They make me wild with envy to get all the wonderful things they advertise but on the whole I think its more fun to improvise your own stuff...*

*I have finished typing my thriller and Daddy is reading it at the moment, he says he thinks it "jolly good" but seems quite able and willing to put it down which he doesn't usually with a thriller - so I'm a bit depressed about it. The only good thing is that he hasn't guessed Who Dun It which I though I had made too obvious. I shall send it off to an agent this week but I'm afraid it will come back pretty quick, but nobody can say I haven't tried.<sup>4</sup>*

*This week has been terribly dull, I don't know what I shall find to write to you about now that the hot weather has started because nothing ever happens. The man-eater hasn't materialised and the head-hunters haven't attacked, all most disappointing really. The police are very active and dashing about checking up on guns etc. and the Gurkhas have been called in, the only people who seem to be quite out of the picture are the Nagas themselves!*

*I can't possibly fill up another page of typing - I shall start keeping a proper diary [note - any diary?] now I've finished my book and copy it out for your letters. The dogs are well, Candy is definitely going to have puppies I'm glad to say, but not too many I hope. Dinah is enormous almost as big as Juno though not as fat, Juno looks huge in spite of her 3 miles a day. The pigeons fly round the drawing-room and perch on the backs of chairs in spite of dogs and cats.*

*Enclose a rather amusing poem from "fishing gazette" -  
Much love from us all - Mummy*

[This is an approximate date. I had written about the trout eggs on 8th April.]

Sunday 22 Apr: Richard takes Alan to church at Ambleside and brings back Fiona

23 Apr: Richard and Alan out for lunch

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Werner who died in January 1957.

<sup>4</sup> [NOTE The book could not be placed.]

28 Apr: Alan and I went to Hawkshead

29 Apr: Went to church with Anne and Alan

30 Apr: Alan goes fishing with Greaves [Grieves] on Windermere Richard's photo snaps of children arrive - V. good; Alan comes back with broken fishing rod

1 May: Alan goes back to school

5 May: Wright invites us in to see Cup

Fiona to Parents, 5 July 1956 Field Head [Postmark in India 25 July, so this date is approximate]

*My dearest Mummy and Daddy,*

*I hope you are both well and I also hope you had a nice birthday mummy.*

*I am writing this to thank-you VERY VERY VERY much for sending me that lovely camel, I like it best out of all my belongings, that and my pearl brooch.*

*At the moment I am alone in the house, as Granny has taken Anne to hospital to be re-tested or looked at or something, and Grandpa has taken Juno out.*

*Yesterday we went riding for the first time this hols, we went down to Outgate and round to the Drunken Duck along that Rd that has notices pointing to Barngate Inn. We went along there, past the D. Duck and back by the other road past the Deserted Farm and Napit's house. Along that last Road there are lots of wild Strawberries and Junsi (Juno) and I went back after (on foot) and picked lots.*

*Granny and Grandpa went for coffee with Mr and Mrs Nappett (spelt wrong last time). They came back at about 10.30 Anne and I stayed up waiting for them, but Granny said she really meant us to go bed.*

*The hay is being cut all round and am suffering from hay-fever so can't help. I don't get it all that badly if I stay in but out in the fields it is murder.*

*The Barrs and us have got a pashen for cricket and when they come back from school we play it. I am Cyril Washbrooke, Anne is Peter May, Alan is Keith Miller. Billy Laker Pip Lock and Phyliss, Beno. We have lost two balls and found 3. We also play "Stuck in Mud" but that's a bit dangerous for Granpa's garden.*

*Although you are MEANT not to be allowed over it.*

*The Black-current and Raseberries are both doing well and the plums and apples are both coming on well. The sweet peas are wonderful so are the roses. The peas bean cabbages and lettuces are all nice.*

*One of my walks I came across a lovely Dapple mare and by it a tiny dapple foal the split image. The stallion has lots of mares which have come to breed with it. My favourite is now a gorgeous white mare.*

*How are the dogs and all the animals....*

*It will be the wedding [Robert and Angela] soon and Lordy I am sure to do something awful please cross your fingers for luck for me (on the day).*

*The weather has cheered up although it was thundering and lightning last night. Well I am longing to go out. So I must close. I will write again soon.*

*Tons and tons of Love, your everloving daughter Fiona.*

*[lots of xxx to various members of the family and animals]*

21 July: Saw big race won by Ribo on T.V.

31 Jul: Alan arrives, Spider meets him at Ambleside

Fiona to parents, 1 Aug 1956 Field Head .

[Date stamped 7 August - and Alan returned on 31st July]

*My dearest Mummy and Daddy,*

*Thank you very much for your letter...*

*The weather here is really awful and everything is flooding...*

*Shiela [grandmother's niece] and Noel Lawn are here staying with us, and the dear sweet 7 months old baby also called Noel. So Noel (grown up one I mean) is called Spider coz he's so tall. Shiela sends her love to you... Isn't it smashing about the test match....*

*To-day Anne Granny and all went to Cartmore [Cartmell] to have Anne's and my bridesmaid dresses. They are awfully nice. Liz (Angela's sister) is making them all herself...*

*How is Dinah and of course Candy... The picture of you and Toad and Mole is absolutely wizard, I think you look jolly nice.*

*Alan arrived back yesterday. Noel took us to Ambleside to meet him of course he managed to lose the bus from Kendal. So we had to wait quite a long time before he turned up. With fishing rods. The toothbrush in his pocket and a bag of what seemed to be full of rubbish over his sholder...*

*Please excuse my unreadable scrawl and I am awfully sorry this is such an uninteresting letter.*

*Lots and lots and lots of love your everloving daughter Fiona  
masses of xxxx and to the animals etc.*

*I am jolly glad the eggs have hatched.*

3 Aug: Alan goes fishing all day

5 Aug: Went to church with 3 children

6 Aug: Children go out for lunch to Grisedale; Children go out for day to Grisedale Tarn and come back soaking wet

#### Alan to parents, 7 August 1956, Field Head

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*Howa re you? I hope you are very well. I have been back home for exactly a week now. The wheather has been on the whole very good except for the first few days when the river was up in flood and it rained nearly every day. On Saturday the girls and I decided to walk out to Grizedale Tarn (which is about a mile beyond the other end of Esthwaite) but Fiona forgot the Map and we took the wrong road and searched for hours in the woods for it and altogether walked about 10 miles and Juno (who is very fit) was tired out. So on Monday we tried again and found it. It was a round pond-like tarn with water lillies round most of it. I didn't see any trout in it but I decided to try fly fishing from the other side and Fiona got an old stick and put a worm on to a hook tied on to a piece of string and dropped it into a few inches of water and left it. And I went round to the other side but before I could cast (I had got into a tangle) Anne shouted that there was a fish on the end and she pulled out a 5 ins perch! And that was the only fish we caught. Robert arrived Yesterday and the whole of Today we have been playing "Tip and Run" and having great battles with my soldiers. I hope you find the Gold!! Keep trying!!*

*Lots of love, Alan*

9 Aug: Robert and Alan go on Lake

18 Aug: Robert's wedding day

#### Fiona to parents, 19 August 1956 Field Head

*My dearest Mummy and Daddy,*

*Thank you very much for your wizard smashing LONG letter. I wish we could borrow a bit of your nice weather as at the moment it is pouring with rain...*

*I will now tell you in detail all about the wedding. Well to start with we went on Friday evening and had a practise. At first Anne and I went behind Angela and Robbert keeping clear of the train. Then as Liz had to hold Angela's bookey for her She and Sue went in front .... OF COURSE when we were walking up to wards*

*the vestery (in the Practise) Anne manage to trip over one of those things you kneel on. (Luckily she didn't do it on the day) After the practise we went back to P. Close and looked at Bills [Angela's brother] trains and mucked about in the Attic.*

*We got back quite late coz we were waiting for Francis Bloomer to arrive (he was Best Man) adventually he did and Anne and Alan and I went in Richards car. And Robbert and F.Bloomer went in F.B's car. We sang all the way back to stop us feeling sick. I went over to the Bells coz there wasn't enough room here coz of F.B and R. James and Co. Alan was in the shed (and still is) and Anne on the Landing and Uncle Richard in Alans room and F.B and Co in our room. So I went to the Bells. When we arrived (Granny took me over) Anne Bell who I was sleeping with was asleep. Next morning the Day, I woke up with A. Bells Alarm clock as she has to go to work. I lay in bed till Mrs Bell brought me a cup of tea... As Anne and I had to get dressed at P. Close (Cartmel) we went with Robert and F.B. and Gran and Alan and Granpa came after in Uncle Richard's car.*

*Robert and F.B. dumped us in P. Close and went to the Kings Arms ... We mucked about until 12 and SOE the other B-maids were dressed then they came and dressed us. We had pink dresses Bally length with Blue sashes with large bows. We had square net but Liz and Sue had another kind we had little pink shoes with roses on them (artificial) and we had a band of roses (real ones) on our heads (oh I forgot to tell you robert gave Anne a silver charm brazelet with all London things on and me a silver cross for being b-maids). We wore our cross and charm bracelet. Angela looked lovely she wore a lovely white dress with a sort of lace top and a white veil. She had a bookey of yellow roses with some other nice flower (white ones).*

*She had her photo taken and then we went to the church. It wasn't actually raining but it had been before so Liz and Sue held her train. We went in the middle and then stood while they promised and Robert gave the ring Ect. My feet got awfully sore the shoes being so thin. When we got into the vestery we could talk and Liz and Sue said their feet were sore too...*

*The photoes were taken and we went back to P. Close we had a kind of lunch which you jus grab all savories. Bill Alan Morton Carbery? Patrisher (Mortons sister) Anne and I ate about fifty sausages on sticks and I collected the sticks but Alan took away coz he said people would think I had eaten them all. We had more photoes taken and Pat Anne and I sat on the back stairs and she told us (Pat) about "Reach for the Sky" as a film. I have read it, have you?? Afterwards we ate and drank. Some old man made a speech and then Robert did and then F.B. as best man then the cake was cut and then Robert and Angela went to the station to go for his honey-moon. The people threw confety at them and one man tied an old tin the back of their car.*

*We mucked about and then at 8 we went to Grange Hotel to have a dinner. First Bill Alan Morton and us three watched T.V and then we had dinner (which was lovely Turkey Ect) then we watched T.V some more and saw an abstract out of 'The Cruel Sea' then we went back to P. Close and watched the older ones dancing then we came home Anne was sick. Juno is very well glad the dogs are send my love Its actually stopped raining must close now. All my love hugs and xs Fiona*



Fiona and Anne as bridesmaids

Alan to parents, 20 August, 1956 Field Head

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*Thank you very much for your letter, the weather has been pretty frightful lately but luckily it did not rain all day on the day of the wedding and they were able to take some nice photographs afterwards. The night before we had a rehearsal (spelt right?) so that on the day everything went off well and it was quite good fun; after the service a professional photographer took thousands of photographs and then we went in and ate titbits and talked and drank (I only drank 1 glass!! Champagne, sherry, [cider, orange juice]) So for two hours I wandered round and round the house and then the bride and groom went on the tea in (Plus tin can and confetti) in Richards car. After they had gone we fooled about a bit more and then we had tea and at about half past seven we went off to Grange, in about six cars and we watched television for a bit at Grange Hotel before we went into dinner there, we had a very uproarious time The "Menu" was*

*Iced ... Melon*

*Asparagus Soup*

*Poach Hallibut + (Bit of french)*

*Roast Turkey and Veg*

*Any kind of ice or fruit salad*

*coffee*

*Drink: Cider*

*It was a very good supper and after this we went back to Cartmell to watch the dancing and after that we drove back (Anne was a bit tired so that she was sick on the way). This evening Richard drove us in to Bowness to see "The Damn Busters" which was very good. ... As the girls have probably told you the Barr's have got a sheepdog puppy which they have very originally called Lassie!! The garden is in very good shape although the lawn is a bit of a mess because it is sopping wet and the Barrs go clumping about on it in great big boots!*

*Keep looking for the Gold!!!*

*Lots of love, Alan*

- 21 Aug: Children go to Tarn Hows with Perkins
- 22 Aug: Richard and Alan leave for Iwerne
- 31 Aug: Violet returns with Richard and Alan from South
- 2 Sep: Went to Church with Violet Richard and Alan
- 4 Sep: Hawkshead Show, Juno unplaced
- 8 Sep: Violet and children go to Film at Windermere
- 9 Sep: Children went to church

Fiona to Parents, Sunday 9 Sep 1956, Field Head, Outgate, drawing room

*Dearest Mummy and Daddy,*

*Thank you very much for your letter.*

*To-day its Sunday morning and only Anne and I are up. I got up early to go musherooming, but I didn't get any not a good year for musherooms this year. Anyway I expect the Barrs have got them all. As you know the D[eserted] Farm is now not deserted so we can't get musherooms from them.*

*The Barrs have gone back to school they went on Monday. We shall be going soon now...*

*The weather is jolly fine now and we have made a tree house. With a ladder (rope one) up to it in the You Tree. We each have a perch Alan has an awful high one so he can see out of the top.*

*We have also divided the shed (second down) 1 in to 3 parts one for Alan and one each for Anne and I. for Alan's got all his fishing, airgun Ect! on his side Anne's got couldn't tell you nothing if you asking me. And I've got painting Ect!!!!*

*The plums are ready and I have eaten tons much to Alan's disgust. ...*

*The Barrs have a new tractor and as it was fine yesterday they cut the hay...*

*Just now I'm listening to Housewife's choice it's the Rock and Roll wants?. We always love listrning to H.W. Choice.*

*Granny and I are going to Kendal to-day to get school ect!! Alan and Anne are coming coz they don't need anything - except Alan needs a new mac. I couldn't tell you where my mac belt is but I expect! Shall find it. Yesterday we tried to teach Pip Barr to ride a bike and as he was getting on OK. we sat outside the hedge by the house and let him go down by himself he went into the write's [Wright's] fence and fell into a patch of nettles and refused to do any more so that's that.*

*Hope the dogs are well... Well I must close, Lots of love your everloving daughter Fiona (fish!!)*

- 14 Sep: Alan goes fishing
- 15 Sep: Violet and children and Barrs go to Kendal to Cinema
- 16 Sep: Went to Church with children in Richard's car
- 17 Sep: Alan goes to Elterwater to spend day with Grieve
- 18 Sep: Alan out of sorts
- 19 Sep: Pension increased from £620-15-0 to £708--17
- 20 Sep: Alan goes back to school with Doogan.
- 13 Oct: Went to Wrights to see 'Horse of the Year' on T.V.



21 Oct: Saw detective play and Bolshoi ballet "Swan Lake" on Wrights T.V.

Iris to Alan 10 Dec 1956 Cherideo

*My dear Alan,*

*This is your official birthday letter but I haven't the remotest idea when it will arrive, somewhere near the day I hope. It brings lots and lots of love and happy returns from us both (Daddy says he is writing separately!) and wishes for a lovely day. I hope you like our present which we ordered without seeing but trust will be right. Lovely to think I shall be with you for your next birthday and the one after - but rather terrifying to think that after that you'll be grown up - however it happens to us all...*

*Oh dear, my morning has been ruined by a female arriving and nattering and now its half past twelve and the postman champing at the door. However rather than keep this and risk making it late, I'll send it off and write a proper letter in a day or two. Daddy says he has written this morning! I still haven't got the money for my article and am getting distinctly suspicious, yesterday I met a professor of history who had read my article, I asked him if it was all right and he said "Almost" but wouldn't elaborate, so far I haven't had any rude letters though which is surprising. Noddy has gone, I miss him terribly but apparently he is quite happy and doted on by his new owners, Dinah seems to be missing him and has been very quiet and forlorn the last few days. Well I really must get this off or it won't go at all, the wedding photos have arrived and we think them very good except of Richard and Francis who both look terribly grim!*

*With much love and happy returns - Mummy*

Iris to Alan, Fiona and Anne, Cherideo 12 December 1956

*Darlings,*

*Although it doesn't seem like Christmas at all here, I think this must be a Christmas letter, knowing how the posts get held up at this time of year. I hope you have a lovely day, I know you will, we shall be thinking of you every minute and wishing we were with you. I expect it will be a quiet day this year as with petrol rationing people won't be able to move around much, but I hope you manage to get to some of the hunts and maybe get some skating, the skates will have moved down one and Alan perhaps be without, we'll have to see what we can do about that, if he needs them urgently he'd better take out some savings money and we'll refund it! But I gather you're going to fish most of the hols Alan, the very thought of sitting by the side of frozen lakes makes me shiver! ...*

*The postman is here, so I must stop, I will be writing to Granny to-morrow, I hope you'll give her lots of help, I know you will. What about logs with candles and snow on them for decorations, and a kissing ring wound with greenery and coloured ribbons - but I expect you have your own ideas.*

*Lots and lots of love and Christmas swishes to you all - Mummy*

20 Dec: Alan's birthday; Alan comes home

23 Dec: Richard arrives 6.41 Windermere

24 Dec:

Mr Barr brings turkey and Xmas tree lights

Fiona to parents, 24 December 1956, Christmas Eve.

*Dearest Mummy and Daddy,*

*... Juno is very well indeed and is absolutely sweet... Alan has got her a 3d bar of Aaro (spelling!!) which I know she'll enjoy. At the moment she is lying in front of the fire (electrical) in our room keeping Annie company coz she's in bed with a kind of flu only she ok now so she is going to get up tomorrow so is Alan who also had it Granny and I didn't get it!! ... lots of cards and mysterious parcels. And lots of coloured paper and that nice sticky celotape and those christmas stickers. Of course the usual people have sent me cards who I haven't sent*

them to...

*Its Christmas Eve! I had an interruption so I will continue now will that be ok? Hundreds more cards have arrived and lots more parcels.*

*To-day Robert and Angela came over for lunch. They are at Priory Close for Christmas... They arrived at 11 o'clock. The thing was we all overslept until about 9. Then it was just a mad rush... But all turned out well. They arrived and then I went down to Hawkshead on my Bike it was snowing and awfully cold but I wanted to get some balloons. We had a smashing lunch. We had a ham (weighing almost 125 pounds which Uncle Arnold sent) and the remains of yesterday lamb and sprouts and roast potatoes... and we all had crackers.*

*The lights (which we found) kept breaking so Granny has got some new ones. They are nice but I don't like them as much as the old ones. They are in shapes of Father Christmas and things.*

*I am just dying for to-morrow, I can't wait.*

*Alan loved your birthday presents and is just dying to use the reel. I read your letter Daddy (I hope you don't mind!) and I think you are VERY rood. I AM NOT FAT! SEE! (nor is Annie).*

*Well I must close, I will write soon. Hope you had a Happy Xmas....Fiona*

25 Dec: Went to 11 am service. Very cold walk

26 Dec: Snow, Richard and 3 children walk to Tarn Hows

#### Alan to parents, 28 December 1956

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*I came back from school by the 7.30 bus to Kendal and at about 8.20 (after only 5 mins waiting!) We (Doogan and I) reached Windermere in about 15 mins and then walked across the road and immediately caught a bus to Ambleside, so far it had been very efficient but at Ambleside I had to wait over an hour for the bus to Hawkshead, however it was not too bad sitting in the bus reading a magazine. Not much happened before Christmas except Robert and Angela came over the day before as they couldn't come over on the actual day as they had been invited to a dinner. We had a lovely time on Christmas day especially with a 15 lb Turkey and a 15 lb ham! On Christmas evening it started snowing so we had a partly white Christmas and on Boxing day we awoke to a white world. The snow was only about 3" deep but it looked lovely on the hills with the dark pines standing out against it. Uncle Richard and the Girls and I went for a walk up the tarns path and round the other side and back. The tarns was mostly covered with what I supposed was meant to be ice but was really only slush, a pity as I would love some skating with the new skates Granny gave me at Christmas (mine have passed to Fiona and Fiona's to Anne so that we have now all got them). The next day we went up Latterbarrow which was quite good fun, but now the snow is just slush and is horrible to walk in so that Fiona and I only went to Hawkshead. I don't know whether I have told you already but we have got 3 schoolboys playing in the England v Scotland Public schools rigger match including the captain of England Miller (our 1st XV capt) and the Scottish cpt[captain] Forrest. Lots of love, Alan*

29 Dec: Fine, Alan and Fiona go to Ambleside

30 Dec: Fine, Richard took 3 children to church

31 Dec: Alan goes fishing

# 1957

## Grandfather's diary 1957 [a few extracts]

### 1957

1 Jan

Went to meet of hunt at Drunken Duck in dull drizzly day - Very different from last year.

2 Jan

Robert and Angela arrive. I sleep in drawing room.

6 Jan

No church owing to rain

Went to see Knappets with Violet. She offered to put up our overflow in cases of stress.

9 Jan

Received papers from Solicitor re maters Will to sign as Executor

Presents from Bill and Julia received

10 Jan

Lovely day,

Took Anne to Keswick and put her into the Penrith bus.

Walked back from Ambleside to Outgate where bus carrying Violet and Alan and Fiona (who went to Kendal to shop - met me)

12 Jan

Fine, Richards birthday

Went for walk with Alan and Anne

Sunday 13 Jan

Fine Cold, All of us to church

14 Jan

Fine Cold

Letter from John Read from I.O.M. (Isle of Man)

Went to coffee at Canon Bradleys

Miss Lakes friend in a bad way

Fiona and Violet get new frock for Fiona for tomorrow's party

15 Jan

Alan and Fiona go to Doogan's party<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This was the party at Brathay Hall of Mike Doogan, another boy at Sedbergh. I remember the occasion well - the awkwardness, the shiny black shoes I wore, only dancing with Fiona, a long narrow room, the taste of excitement and slight smell of perfume.

16 Jan  
Fine cold  
V takes Anne to Kendal for doctor's overhaul

Thursday 17 Jan  
Fine Cold  
The three children go back to school

### **Spring 1957**

28 Mar  
Iris arrives by plane from India and stays night with Robert

29 Mar  
Iris arrives [at Field Head]

30 Mar  
Iris put on film

Sunday 31 Mar  
Girls arrive for day  
Saw more films

1 Apr Fiona's birthday  
Sowed Cauliflower and leeks  
Put lawn sand on front lawn

3 Apr  
Walked to Hawkhead with Violet  
Letter from Margery.

4 Apr  
Sent back cheque for £186 to lawyers and rent to Ulverston

Passion Sunday 7 Apr  
Violet takes children to church<sup>6</sup>

9 Apr  
Cold dry, Budget day

10 Apr  
Cold dry, Wrote to Arnold

11 Apr  
Cold dry, Sent in Income Tax return

12 Apr

---

<sup>6</sup> My guess that my grandparents only went to church when we were around seems to be right.

Cold dry  
Alan goes fishing on Esthwaite water with Manzie Fe

13 Apr  
Warmer rain  
Letter from Barbara Homfray  
Alan marks out Padder Court  
P.C. from Julia from Hongkong  
Won £10 with Hill 2 ways 2 draws short list.

Palm Sunday 14 Apr Lovely day

15 Apr  
Manzi Fe comes to drinks with his son David

16 Apr  
Lovely day  
Alan and Manzie Fe go on Lake Windermere and Fiona  
Anne ill in bed  
Anniversary of Beit Issa<sup>7</sup>

17 Apr  
Rain  
Usher and man came to deal with Sewage drain

18 Apr  
Drain completed  
Went with girls to Ambleside to see Brownson for affidavit

### **Iris Memoranda Book**

#### 18 Apr 1957 Lakes

Home nearly 3 weeks - the most disappointing I can remember, I don't know why, the children are sweet and cheerful, the house is nice, countryside lovely - so why do I crave with a longing that is almost physical sickness for the Naga hills, mimosa, my temple, heat, dust and brown faces? Perhaps it will pass I hope so. Alan is taller than I am and no longer good-looking, pimply and scruffy but vastly improved in every way; contented and gay and witty and quite lost his discontented frown. Fiona is full of character as always, bustling about, chewing her locket, combing her hair, cuddling her white mouse and writing to her friends. Anne I'm not sure about. She seems to have no interests or want to do anything particularly except handstands on the persian carpet; my life has been complicated by an attack of the flu which has made me feel incredibly ill and cold; and my life of space and ease has made me spinsterish and bothered by the congestion of sleeping in "cabins" in the hall, and having to keep all my clothes, passports and unfinished novels in one drawer. My hands are like sandpaper from washing up and my leg tastefully spattered with chilblains but there are good moments. If only Mac was here, that is the real trouble, I feel an alien and a stranger.  
Overheard. I said to her she's your mother. I said, she's the only one you'll ever have, I said, and when she's gone she's gone. I told her straight.

---

<sup>7</sup> Beit Issa was the battle in Palestine where my grandfather got his MC and nearly a VC

## **Grandfather's diary**

Good Friday 19 Apr  
Prepared bed for rhubarb

25 Apr 1957  
Fine  
Sowed flower seeds in front garden  
Saw Dressage on Wrights TV

26 Apr  
Fine, Went to drinks with Manzi Fe  
Letter from Roy  
Walked to Hawkshead with Violet

27 Apr 1957  
Fine  
Violet Iris and children go to Windermere to see Film  
Took Juno to Juniper Hill  
Wrote to Roy  
Sowed cauliflowers

Sunday 28 Apr  
Fine  
Iris and Alan to Church  
Saw Badminton Horse Trials on TV at Wrights  
Cut hanches? and staked sweet Peas

29 Apr  
A little rain  
Girls go back to school  
Johnstones arrive for tea and go on to Bowness

30 Apr  
Lovely day  
Alan goes back with Doogan [to Sedbergh]  
Robert is after a house at Whitley

### 3 May 1957 Lakes, Memoranda

The holidays are over, the children gone, the house quiet and I have a room to myself - but I wish they were back, noise and confusion and Radio Luxemburg and all. What do I remember about the holidays? The good moments - the bluebell woods and the picnic with the primus stove and the 2 tiny trout and Fiona saying "You're pretty, you're awfully pretty". Cocoa round the electric fire with Alan tapping the top of a biscuit tin and Anne writing hit tunes on the back of an envelope. Juno being jumped over the padder net, the girls in their jodhpurs. Anne sleeping on her back in the sun on the front lawn, the smell of wallflowers, birds' nests. Slowly the spell of an English spring is beginning to work on me, and such a lovely spring, but still I long for Cherideo. The oaks are turning a lovely pinky gold, chestnuts in flower, bluebells in the hedgerows and the cuckoo calling. I take Juno for a walk after lunch and lie in the soft grass and stare down at the fat white houses in the fat green fields and the cobalt blue hills behind and the lakes and cows and the trembling shiny larches and feel it is almost too good, too picturesque and studied. I was with the

girls, but Alan - I don't know what goes on in his head, nor is it my business to. The thing is to leave him not to pry or interfere, to hope for the best.

### 6 May 1957 Lakes, Memoranda

Took the girls to the dentist, both looking rosy and well, but Anne a bit weepy at the thought of going back to school - I wish I could keep her with me, she is a home lover and would do better as a day-girl. Why does one inflict these separations on oneself and one's family - for whose good - surely it's unnatural and artificial? One can almost envy the underdeveloped and backward races who are deprived of the blessings of education, a high standard of living, and the arid, fruitless privations they entail. I'm writing up my Ahom history in the faint hope that *History Today* may publish it - I must tackle my Assamese again, am in one of my drifting moods, when nothing seems to lead anywhere.

Want to write an article about the children - my visions of them and the facts - the fights at meals, the Racing Papers, the handstands, the white mice and David Whitfield, the fishing flies and the onion-frying at 11.30, the Pick of the Pops and the murder stories, the borrowing of clothes and hair grips and shampoo, the letter-writing - I must do it before I forget.

### **Grandfather's diary**

17 May: Went with Iris and Violet to Kendal Music Festival - Anne there. Looked at R.Hadwin and Son 29/31 Finkle St and at Whitesides 49 Stramongate re. Television

### Iris to Alan, Monday 20 May 1957 Field Head

*Dear Alan,*

*Herewith the 30/- hope it arrives safely, should really have sent a P.O. I've found the list of prices you got from that man when you bought some of his Hornby stuff, so now I can go ahead with the advertisements and hope the cash comes pouring in!*

*We went into Kendal on Thursday to hear Anne and the Hilltoppers competing in the Kendal Musical festival, they came 2nd in their class, in fact were only beaten by 1 mark. Unfortunately the competition part was in the morning which was difficult for us with buses, Juno, laundry etc etc etc - so we didn't hear Anne's lot sing alone but the combined choirs sang together which was very effective as there were about 400 children taking part. Fairfield seniors also came 2nd so they did very well considering Kendal High school is so much bigger.<sup>8</sup>*

*The day before I went in to Ambleside to meet Anne at the dentist, foolishly took Juno and arrived home feeling as if a steamroller had been over me. I tried to leave her in the waiting room while the dentist saw us but she made such a thundering noise that I had to let her in, she sprang at Anne in the chair, knocking the dentist and his assistant off balance - obviously thought Anne needed rescuing from some dreadful fate and had to be lifted off bodily! then I went on to Fairfield and she obviously got Fiona's scent as she refused to leave, when the Fish appeared there was chaos with Piggys and Jane Ent's. being knocked screaming in all directions! Poor Juno, I finally had to drag her away on her stomach.*

*Frightful weather until about 7 p.m. when we all rush out and garden, I'm cutting the hay by the front steps which is a slow business with scissors but its going to kill me when my hay-fever starts. The grass on the back lawn is doing well and should be ready to be played on soon, we're pulling down that odd shed and making a small lean-to instead, or rather Mr Usher is. Also persuaded Grandpa to move his compost heap to behind the beech hedge so when we've thrown out a few iron grates and old carpets it should look quite tidy.*

*I'll let you know about Speech day but shall have to find out about buses. We'll definitely come over on the Saturday, but don't know if we can make the speeches - hope you'll be playing in a cricket match perhaps? I've booked you and Daddy for that place in the Shetlands which describes itself as the best Centre for*

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<sup>8</sup> Fairfield School, Ambleside, set up by the educational innovator Charlotte Mason, is described in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte\\_Mason](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte_Mason)

*brown trout fishing in north Scotland - so you might catch something. I'll send your spinning reel as soon as it comes. I hope you're not missing too much by not having one.*

*May see you Thursday week at the dentist?*

*With much love from us all. Mummy*

*Top Twenty*

*(1) Heart (2) Butterfly (3) Young love (4) Singin' the Blues (5) True Love (6) Banana Boat (7) Look homeward Angel (8) Mangos, papyrs (9) Don't forbid me (1) Mary Anne (11) Rock-a-billy (12) Knee deep in the blues (13) 99 ways (14) I'll find you (15) Chapel of the Roses (16) Adoration Waltz (17) Cumberland Gap (18) The Wisdom of a fool (19) All (20) Good Companions*

#### 5 Jun 1957 Lakes, Memoranda Book

Half-term is over and the girls have come and gone. They spent the weekend falling off their bikes and making Russian toffee and left me with a pile of sticky tins and a bathful of clothes covered with blood and bicycle oil. Fiona brought a friend, Janie North, who we found trying and meant that she and F. dashed off together and left Anne out. The weather was heavenly and there were some good moments - the picnic we went on Saturday, the cooking of sausages under the dappled trees and afterwards, when they had gone, lying under a golden green fan of leaves with a small beck glinting beside me, warm and sleepy and emptied of irritations. And on Sunday Anne and I walked through hot fields of buttercups, clover and cow parsley to Black Beck where we dabbled our toes and looked for water wagtails nests. Anne is still at the sweetly unsophisticated stage and clings to me in a gratifying way which, alas, will pass. I always feel tired and empty when they've gone, and vaguely dissatisfied as if an opportunity had passed which won't return and has been in any case, missed. Now there are chores and irritations and lots of work until Mac comes and then I shall be happy I swear it, we shan't fight, we shall be content and complete at last.

#### 16 Jun 1957 Lakes, Memoranda book

Flaming June for once, the hay hot and glistening, the tar on the roads like black treacle, birds muted, cows drooping under trees and sheep like dabs of paint against walls. It is almost too hot to go out and my hay fever has started so I can't seek the comfort of Black Beck as the front fields are murder - sad to think I shan't enjoy the buttercups and clover again and the ox-eye daisies. Wild roses and foxgloves are out and its light till 10 or later, wish Mac was here and we could swim and go for supper picnics.

I went to Alan's speech day yesterday - set off at ten to 8 and got there at 11.15. My memories of it - burning, sore feet, hay fever, hot humanity and hot rubber, our picnic lunch under the oak tree with the first strawberries of the season and the anguish of seeing Alan bowled for a duck - my prayer unanswered. He seems well and happy though I always get the feeling that he's a bit out of things - and rather depressed for that reason. The speeches were prosaic, the parents madly smart but on closer inspection not very attractive and I didn't see a soul I knew all day except Mr Marriot who obviously didn't know me! Staggered back on my ragged feet and ate 2 ice creams in Kendal snack bar which was full of pasty long-haired youths listening to the gramophone and tired mothers in unsuitable cottons. Today is almost hotter and I've hardly been out, flies and bees and flame-red poppies are the only things enjoying it.

#### **Grandfather's diary<sup>9</sup>**

Only a few items included here as my grandparents had gone off to a separate cottage after the arrival of my father, so our lives were separated.

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<sup>9</sup> When my parents returned from India my grandparents went to stay in other cottages near Windermere and in Outgate.



19 Jul

Mac arrives with family and go to Slacke Cottage

[My father had arrived back from Assam. The move to Slacke cottage was an interim solution until my grandparents moved three days later to Outgate]

22 July

Came to Old Cottage Outgate

30 Jul

Fine

Alan returns from School

Worked in garden at Field Head

6 Aug

Mac installs T.V. and V.H.F.

9 Aug

Mac and family go out for day to Morcambe

Took pansy lavender and bellow sibirica cuttings to Field Head

11 Aug

Spent afternoon at Field Head and heard Shiller (14) play violin concerto in Youth Orchestra

15 Aug Alan's report came

17 Aug

Richard arrives

18 Aug

Fine

Tea and TV at Field Head

Mac drives us all to Cartmel to celebrate Robert and Angela's wedding anniversary.

Alan comes to lunch.

28 Aug

Went to Field Head for supper

£1 book token from Richard

Cloches from Mac and Iris

Shirt from Billy and Julia and cable wishes from Robert

Note from Mrs Elliott

1 Sep

Went to Field Head<sup>10</sup>

Sowed Calendula and Larkspur

19 Sep

Iris and family return from Scotland

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<sup>10</sup> We had gone off to Scotland, where my father and I went on our Shetlands fishing holiday together, hence my grandparents could come back into the house.

Friday 20 Sep  
Alan returns to school

Iris to Alan, Friday 27 Sep 1957 Field Head

*My dear Alan,*

*So it's caught up with you - pretty fast too, but I don't think you can have taken it back with you as we've not succumbed yet. I do hope you aren't feeling too lousy and will make a quick recovery, I imagine it'll rush through the School and cause chaos for a bit but perhaps its just as well to get it over now before the rigger really gets cracking. We were going to come over next Saturday (to-morrow week) to see the match, but if flu is epidemic perhaps they won't be able to produce a team? Let us know when you feel strong enough.*

*Got the girls off yesterday, split second timing so that we could see "Champion" first! Daddy has arranged to have his cholera injection just when they were due back which complicated things, however we managed am now gathering up all the things they've forgotten and searching for Fiona's hockey stick which we've seen but can't pin down. Our last 'shop' at Kendal produced both her skirt and "Last Train to San Fernando" but the latter was discovered to be scratched or else its her ruddy gramophone - anyway its her ruddy gramophone - anyway it wont play properly! We had the whole of the opera "Salome" on T.V. last night, well sung but very gruesome. We're getting professional tennis every evening which is nice and the Polish athletics were good except that they cut us off two vital events before the end!*

*We're now just about to embark on the painting of the kitchen, Daddy is making every possible excuse but I hope I can drive him on, and not too scatty.*

*I'll send along your socks, herewith licences - do hope you're just about up by now and not feeling too washed-out. I expect to have the girls back any day now! Granny and Grandpa come back on Tuesday so It'll probably be the usual muddle.*

*Much love, will write again in a day or two - Mummy*

**Grandfather diary**

5 Oct

Mac and Iris go to Sedbergh to see Alan and rigger

9 Oct

Mac and Iris leave for London picking up Robert at Cartmel

Iris to Alan, Sunday 26 Oct 1957, Field Head

*My dear Alan,*

*Just struck me that I haven't written to you this week, awful lapse, I'm so sorry, I'll make Sat. my writing day in future so you'll get it on Monday. I was sorry to hear about your sad game of Rigger, but hope you've got back your strength now and get some good games. I can't manage next Saturday (2nd) as the girls are out for half term, but could come over any other day. They are out from 1st-4th, plus a friend of Anne's and the Barrs are putting forward their bonfire so I shall have to run out and get some rockets if they're not sold out. Robert was supposed to be coming over to-day but hasn't turned up, the 8.30 bus he had to catch must have been too much for him!*

*A quiet week here, with 2 daring outings to Ambleside as the highlights. My painting has kept me busy, but has made remarkably little difference to the house except for splodges of white in noticeably wrong places! Granpa lay on the stairs all one wet day and scraped at the woodwork in an effort to get off the revolting brown stain but without much effect. I must say I miss Daddy when there are jobs to be done around the house, panic reigns when the smallest screw has to be fixed into a wall!*

*I'm going to advertize your electric trains again. What about the Air Gun or will you want it for rabbits?<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Trying to raise money for a motor bike.

*Celia Edye sent some grey jungle-cock feathers for flies and I've told Stanley to keep any pheasant's neck feathers they have, he's always telling me of the number they shoot - without a licence I feel sure! The hunt is meeting at Hawkhead to-day, a lovely day and I'd like to have followed a few yards - but the joint has to be coped with! Juno is in good form and back to all her bad habits, though I am trying very hard to make her obedient.*

*I'm beginning to think vaguely about Christmas, shall try to make some of my cards if I can think of anything except camels and Christmas Trees to paint. I'm hoping we might go down to London for a few days at the beginning of Jan. but it rather depends on finance, and if Robert will let us have his flat! Couldn't possibly afford a hotel. I must make up my mind soon as there'll be things to book. We shall probably end up at the Morecambe Panto so don't get too excited! I had thought of getting a job to try to raise funds but there doesn't seem to be much scope round here, particularly for such a short time.*

*Yorkshire pudding to be made, so must dash. I haven't heard the hit parade for ages, but I gather "Tammy" is at the top, we had the Tommy Steele story on T.V. the other day, didn't realise he was quite so ghastly with a great mop of greasy curls and a smile like a crocodile. I seem to miss all the best programmes getting supper, I had to leave "Il Travatore" halfway the other night, which broke my heart. Shall we have high tea in the holidays? How's the tuck, do you want anything? Much love, Mummy  
[at top of sheet 'Here is Robert!']*

#### Iris to Alan, Saturday 2 Nov 1957 Field Head

*My dear Alan,*

*I'm writing this in bed, after an exhausting day tramping Kendal in search of Fiona's wardrobe - a party frock this time. We started off in a light shower of hail which was a bit putting off, and staggered in at 6 p.m. in a fairly heavy downpour. In between had pulled clothes on and off Fiona, waited for buses, tried not to buy presents for Sally, bought presents for Sally and seen a fairly good western called "Stampeded". We took Anne and her friend Lorraine with us and they trailed wearily but gamely behind. Anyway that is the last of Fiona's wardrobe for a long time. We got back in time for "6.5 Special", "Wells Fargo" etc etc. Now I have a raging headache which isn't surprising but enjoyed the wrestling we saw on I.T.V. everybody else loathes it! The girls came back from school at crack of dawn yesterday and the weather has been loathsome since they arrived, hail, gales and generally foul, you've probably had the same. We spent yesterday afternoon making toffee, with varying success, to-morrow we're supposed to be having the Barr's bonfire but it looks pretty hopeless in this sodden sort of weather. I shan't really be too sorry as I shall have to be O.C.<sup>12</sup> Fireworks and shall probably get muddles with the ones that say "hold in the hand" and ones that tell you to "Light Blue Paper and Retire" - with gruesome results! I don't think they've made a Guy, shall probably have to do it as usual. They're selling Flicka and Gypsy the carthorse, I would quite like to buy Flicka but can't at the moment.*

*I've spent the usual sort of week, mucking about with paint, tacking bits of rubber to the bottom of doors, wrestling with the Aga and reaching the end of every day in a state of exhaustion, though with nothing done. The man arrived to look at the Aga on Thursday and scraped vast quantities of dust and ashes out of unlikely holes and it's now going like a bomb, which is a relief. Before I forget, about the mouth-organ, I'd planned to give you a decent one for your birthday! Would you like me to get it now in advance, or can you get one cheaper at school? In which case I'll send you your £1 as asked. Sorry to have to spill the beans, but you put me in a spot!*

*Daddy seems to be finding lots to do, have you heard from him?! Unfortunately the Naga trouble hasn't ended after all,<sup>13</sup> so we can't build our road up into the hills and to the fishing river - as yet*

*I shall come over for the match on Nov 23rd definitely (if you're playing) let me know times a bit nearer the day. I'll ask Daddy to get your godfather's address, but don't know how to contact Pat Travers Smith,<sup>14</sup> or even what her married name is - Alas!*

*Forgive a scrawl. I'm very tired, must get an aspirin and retire to scratch my chilblains for an hour before I can sleep!*

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<sup>12</sup> Officer Commanding

<sup>13</sup> The Naga Independence movement in Assam.

<sup>14</sup> My godmother.

*Fiona sends her love?!  
Much love - Mummy*

Iris to Mac, 6 Nov 1957 Field Head

*My dearest one - Nearly a week since I wrote, time is certainly whizzing past and it's only 2 months till I see you again, still far too long but it'll soon pass. The girls came out for their half-term on Friday, they were brought out by car, arrived at crack of dawn plus Anne's friend, a pretty child and quite pleasant but I get rather peeved having to supply tuck, presents for pashes etc. to extra offspring! The girls were looking shaggy and rather tired, specially Fiona, I'd written to Miss Wharton<sup>15</sup> saying she (F) wasn't sleeping well in a dormitory by herself and could she be moved back, and got a note to say Fiona was being so naughty they couldn't think of any other punishment, they did move her back and there was pandemonium and pillow fights on the spot! Fiona's version of it is that whenever there is anything wrong she is picked on as ringleader, a situation I know well, so I really don't know what line to take! They're being worked much harder under Miss Wharton and she seemed quite worn out, but after a couple of days lying in was much revived. They spent most of the time making toffee and peppermint creams with varying success and a lot of mess, it rained almost solidly which made things difficult but on Saturday we made an expedition to Kendal for F's party frock. We trailed in and out of shops and finally she chose a very sophisticated blue-green taffeta with artificial orchids at the waist, I preferred a yellow frilly affair but she discarded it as far too babyish! Then had to get shoes, suspender belt and nylons, shoes for Anne and presents for various people who were having birthdays, one a miniature bottle of Crème de Menthe which seemed a peculiar choice and will confirm Miss W's worst suspicions if discovered! We had snacks at a cafe and went to a western called "Stampeded" which was a bit grisly but only cost us 9d each. We left the house in a heavy shower of hail, and staggered in at 6 p.m in pouring rain, tired and bedraggled but in time for "Wells Fargo"! Sunday was an awful day, it rained and blew and nothing I suggested seemed to go right. I got so irritated I slapped Anne's thumb out of her mouth and she howled and I felt miserably disappointed, you know how I get. Anyway after lunch sweet-making started again and things gradually settled down. In the evening we were meant to be having the bonfire but it was so wet we just let off a few fireworks instead, the Barrs came over and frightened me to death by holding deadly looking things which said "Light blue paper and retire" in their hands, fortunately it started to rain heavily and we had to give up. Next morning and I'm writing this in the kitchen with my cup of Nescafe beside me and thick frost outside. The view from the front is lovely, the white hills bathed in sunshine and Hawkshead a silver bowl of mist. Pretty nippy too, thank heavens for the Aga. Fred came and scraped lots of ash out of various holes last Thursday and it's going perfectly now, I watched him like a hawk and think I could cope in another crisis, there's a ledge just above the fire which is the cause of trouble. I'm very relieved. The plumbers have been in and put in Mummy's washbasin and we spent yesterday afternoon heaving those grisly "bits" of wardrobe about, she wanted to put her bit into the girls' room but having worked for the last 3 weeks to make the room look nice and achieve a little space, I stuck. In the end I emptied the one on the landing and we tottered along with the glass-fronted one and put it there, accompanied by a Greek chorus from Daddy "It'll never go in, we can't do it"! Anyway they seem pleased with the basin though Daddy's first effort to shave in it resulted in a pool of water on the floor and a sodden pillow on M's bed! They're about to start on the downstairs lav. Thank you for sending another lot of money darling, the girls' bills cleared out Grindlays and left me with £22 in Martins, but I shall be all right now.<sup>16</sup> Still no job. Come to the conclusion I'm unemployable. I was so sorry to hear about poor Doreen Brown (P. White didn't surprise me!) Really the way women carry on with the husbands of their best friends is rather revolting isn't it? Delighted to hear about Cherideo, is that due to plucking fine? Or just your general cleverness darling? I'm very proud of you anyway, don't I tell you that enough, you know it's true. Another 2 lots of tea arrived and we're now stacked to the ceiling so don't send any more. One of the tins had the lid off and was leaking badly.*

*I daren't write any more because of the weight. Hope you've heard from the Edyes about the box  
Be good and keep loving me and don't write severely to Fiona, she has enough grilling at School poor pet - little wretch. All my love xxx Totty.*

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<sup>15</sup> Miss B.M. Wharton, Deputy Head of the school.

<sup>16</sup> According to the fees of the time, Anne and Fiona as Senior boarders would cost £204 a year each.

## Iris to Mac, Sunday 17 Nov, Field Head

*Any news of the box?*

*Darling one -*

*Real November weather, you hardly know whether it's morning or evening, just misty and grey until it gets a bit darker still and the day's over. Actually I like it, very restful, and I like the rather desolate look of the countryside. It's dark by half past four so we can settle down by the fire for hours on end. Actually the fire is a minor irritation as Mummy pulls her large chair well forward and watching T.V. we freeze! I've been tacking strips of rubber to the bottom of doors but draughts still seem to whistle in. I'm sure insulating the attic would help but don't feel capable of coping unless driven to it. We're waiting for the plumber to do the downstairs lav, but he and all the builders are working flat out on converting that barn down the road. We went over it the other day, it has heavenly views from every window but most of the ground floor is garage, all living upstairs so you have to cart up coal etc. which is tiresome. We had the Knappets into "Telly" on Sunday evening, and the Mortons rang up and asked if they could come too, it was the last of a cycle of plays on India and a Zoo Quest film from New Guinea. We gave them coffee first, and I made meringues that looked like lime plaster but tasted quite nice. It was difficult getting seven of us round the set but they enjoyed the programme I think, the interference on the Telly has gone and it's working very well. The Indian play was on partition and very biased in favour of the Muslims but interesting. We had a fearfully sad documentary on Refugee camps last night, old men lying in coffins for beds, quite terrible that they can't do anything about them.*

*We had an unexpected visit from Fiona on Saturday, she and Jane Ent. were drifting round the countryside on some guide job<sup>17</sup>, which involved going into the Drunken Duck and finding the proprietors' name. It all sounded very peculiar! I was out for a walk with Juno when they arrived but they rushed in afterwards and ate some bread and butter, Fiona very cheerful. I'm going over to Sedbergh on Sat to watch Alan play Rugger (I hope!). Sedbergh aren't having a very good season. I don't know whether it's due to flu. I met Mr Doogan in Ambleside the other day and he said Michael had lost his place on the 1st XV because of it which was bad luck. Pat Cowan is coming down for Alan's confirmation but I still haven't quite worked out how we're going to get there! Thank you very much for the money darling, all bills (eyes, teeth and butchers bill from August included) came to £28 and I paid Mummy £30 towards the £46 we owe her, so I've got sixty odd pounds of it left. I'm trying to be economical but every time I go out buy a couple of presents towards Christmas. Anyway the £60 will cover next month's regular bills and most presents and I'll try and put by your December offering towards school bills, or some of it. It's sweet of you to say we must go to London. I'll write to Robert and see if we can stay in his flat, if not the whole thing's out of the question. Uncle Arnold died last week of throat cancer. I think M and D are having expectations but I expect a parcel of grisly oil paintings will be all we'll get! I've finally soda-ed and scraped the hall, and am about to start re-staining it a light colour and then will paint the bathroom walls and call it a day. The Aga's working a dream now.*

*Doesn't seem to be much to say darling. I live from day to day, clean and cook in the morning, walk and tidy in the garden after lunch, then write letters, knit and watch Telly. Mummy has embarked on a huge, enormously expensive rug for the girls for Christmas, 6 ponies on a black and white background, unfortunately the holes in the diagram don't correspond to the holes in the canvas which involves sums in proportion which none of us can do. I'm helping her with it and I can foresee a burning of midnight oil to get it finished.*

*I'm glad the compound's coming on, does the Assamese tilery in front look nice? I'm beginning to go through my Assamese books again with a view to taking up my studies on arrival. Will you lay on a teacher for me? Have you been up to the temple? Will you also get Rosemary's address for me.<sup>18</sup> I'll send her a card. Are they getting a new accountant or will Sawlen cope? What a lot of questions - please answer them darling. I'll send your Christmas card in my next letter, usual home-made effort! I ordered the Turkey today and am going to make the pudding tomorrow, Daddy keeps saying gloomily how he hates Christmas, but as he doesn't have to do a thing towards it we're rather brusque! I wonder what you'll do, go up the river? Do you remember last year, sitting by the camp fire with John Darby eating all our curry puffs and saying "Well I must say this is very pleasant"! And do you remember how cold I got in that horrid little camp be in the night?! We must have a week-end in*

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<sup>17</sup> Girl Guides.

<sup>18</sup> Rosemary Gilfillan, a young girl in Assam whom my parents later brought to England.

*the basha after I arrive, book it darling. Before it gets too warm so I have an excuse to get into your bed. If its fine I'll take the camera to Sedbergh, we haven't seen the sun for weeks it seems. I'm going to tea with Mrs Grieve tomorrow. Stephen passed 9 subjects in "O" level which took the wind out of my sails! Keep loving me, as I do you, always my dearest - Totty*

### **Grandfather's diary**

17 Nov 1957: Knappetts and Mortons come to see T.V. English Family Robinson

23 Nov

Went to Sedbergh with Iris and saw Uppingham and Giggleswick rugger matches

25 Nov

Man starts lobby WC

14 Dec

Violet and Iris go to Sedbergh

Thursday 19 Dec

Alan comes home

20 Dec

V. bad weather

Alan's birthday

Ordered another apple tree from Clarence Webb

21 Dec 1957

Letter from Julia - Billy is pessimistic about his exam

22 Dec

Richard arrives. He stays with Mrs Milner at Hawkhead

24 Dec

Robert, Angela, Liz and her fiance come to drinks

Christmas 25 Dec

Iris and Richard give me electric blanket

27 Dec

Letter from Billy - He may get leave July Aug next year

28 Dec

Liz Wedding to Roy Wilson<sup>19</sup> - at Blawith. Reception at Water park

Richard drove us

Iris to Mac, Tuesday 31 December [London]

*My darling, Forgive this long lapse, but this has been the most hectic week I can remember, and even now life is not exactly tranquil, but I must try to get some sort of letter off. First of all thank you very much for your*

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<sup>19</sup> Liz was Angela's younger sister.

wire darling, it cheered me a lot. There were occasions when I felt on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and never stopped wishing for a moment that you were there to give me both physical and moral support! Christmas eve was a hectic day, as Anne collapsed with a temperature at mid day and I worked pretty continuously to get things organised so that I could enjoy the day itself. Robert, Angela, Liz and fiancé were supposed to be coming in for a drink at 6, but arrived at 8 and at 9.30 Mummy suggested I give all 12 of us supper! I was speechless with tiredness, Anne ill, stockings to fill etc. and was very rude about it (to Mummy) so she called it off! We (Fiona, Alan and I) went to early communion on Christmas day, it was nice walking across the dark fields with the first streaks of dawn over Hawkshead - but the early rise and empty stomach were too much for Fiona and she started to gasp like a fish and had to leave the church quite quickly and wait for us in the freezing porch! The rest of Christmas day was fun, the Turkey and pudding both delicious and Fiona and Anne very helpful with the table decorations (Fiona was a rock all through, made masses of sweets and even filled a stocking for me bless her!). They all seemed pleased with their presents though the girls recorders didn't arrive (they are musical instruments like flutes!) and I think they were a little disappointed with Mummy's rug, I was afraid they might be and she would have done better to give them the money! I got a wastepaper basket (Fiona, home made), string of pearls (Anne), box of chocs (Alan) thing to look at our coloured slides through (M & D) film for the Cine (Richard) and a scarf from Robert and Angela, so did pretty well. Richard didn't contribute as much as a tangerine to the occasion. Mummy suggested that he gave a bottle of port as his part of the celebrations, so he made it part of his present to her! Honestly how mean can you get. Anne was rather wane on Christmas morning but was well enough to come down for lunch and enjoy it, and recovered quite quickly after that. Don't know what hit her.

Boxing Day was wet and we were up too late for the meet, so spent the day tidying and feeling rather deflated. On the 27th we had to go to the dentist and Fiona had 2 fillings to her horror as she was very smug beforehand. Alan has to have one out next week, but Anne just carries on. On 28th was Liz's wedding, which was a gruesome affair. I was picking tacking threads out of my new black dress, cooking lunch and dressing for the wedding all at the same time - then we sat in a cold church and finally ended up at a very hot reception at which I didn't know a single soul. It seemed to go on for hours and I was stuck with rather a dull woman with a piercing voice, the only mildly amusing moment was when we both got our snappers stuck in a hard biscuit at the same moment. Liz looked nice, and the reception was held in an amazing house, huge and gloomy and full of tapestries and four-poster beds, rather eerie. I was never so bored in my life and glad to get away in spite of drinking every glass of Champagne that came near me. Sunday was fairly quiet, just the usual round of cooking and washing and yesterday, when I had all the preparations for our trip here to make Mummy asked Robert and Angela for the day. As usual they sat on and on and obviously expected supper, but I didn't rise, much as I like Angela I feel she might be a little more considerate and thoughtful. I kept mentioning packing and my hair to be washed and she smiled serenely and didn't budge.

So to today, which started by the Aga going out (it's working perfectly but Daddy let it get too low) and Fiona staggering out of bed with black circles under her eyes and feeling sick, Richard drove us to Windermere and all the way down Fiona got worse, was sick several times and obviously feverish. By the time we got to Euston she was in a state of collapse, so we had to get a taxi all the way here (25/- worth). Fiona lay on my lap moaning, the taxi man lost his way, and I began to feel I was acting a real life nightmare and we should never arrive anywhere until we were all raving. Alan finally took the taxi drivers map and got us home, and we soon had the poor Fish in bed with a bottle and an aspirin. Alan and Anne then dashed to the shops and brought some provisions and medicine, lit fires, made supper and were generally terrible efficient. Fiona went straight to sleep and at 10 p.m as I write she has just opened her eyes and said "I feel all right Mummy". So perhaps we shall enjoy our stay here after all, really children have a perfect genius for getting ill at the wrong moment.

Fiona to Mac, 31 December, 1957.

My dearest Daddy,

I hope you had a smashing Christmas. I am very sorry I haven't written before now but there has been so much to do. But I hadn't forgotten you, I thought about you lots what you would be doing ect.

We had a super time, I will give you a long thing on it. Shall I? Tell you everything I did and all I got.

Well we were going to Early morning service. Anne hadn't been well, so she was going to go with Alan Grandpa & Richard later. Alan and Richard went to two services. Anyway after we had opened our stockings,

*I had given Mummy one as well. I got super things, a compass, and a workbag, travelling one with all the things in it, and tons of other things as well. We had to go quite quickly down to church with the result I felt faint, and had to go out I recovered immediately and after breakfast I [was] quite O.K. Then I had to finish wrapping parcels. I had made Mummy a wastepaper basket at school. I gave granny a salt & pepper thing, which I had also made with some pots in it, and Grandpa a token for the flower & gardening shop in Kendal, and Anne gave a necklace with Alan and Alan a record.*

*Then I finished decorating the table. I had a centre-piece in the middle they had been showing us how to make them on T. V. Mummy bought the cake board and a big red candle and I stuck the candle in the middle with sprays of holly all round it. I silvered the holy, and put frost on, then I put nuts and sweets on it. I really looked quite nice. Then I put silver trailers and bowls of nuts fruit and sweets all round.*

*After a SMASHING dinner, of which I ate miles to much. It was Turkey roast potatoes & Brussel sprouts, with white wine to drink then Christmas Pud, of which I could hardly eat anything. We washed up and went into the drawing room. The queen was on T.V. It was quite nice seeing her, but you could see her turning over the paper for her speech which rather spoilt the effect.*

*We then opened our presents. I got a lovely pola neck jersey from Mummy. And I got a locket and a rug (when she had made) from Granny. I got a smashing leather belt from Uncle Alan & Aunty Jean, and a little furry white poodle (the kind in Hannah Robinson's) from Alan & Ann. I got lots of other things from school bods and lots of sweets and an annual from the Cowans. I got 10/6 book token from Mrs Werner<sup>20</sup> coz Mum had sent Charles & Diana something. I got some bath salts from Scilly!!*

*Your present didn't come Mummy was most cross, the shop said it would, but she said she would get it here, in London. Anyway thanks absolutely tons & tons. There are all the winter sales on here dresses at 4/11 and skirts at 5/-. We saw some of the makes on T.V. You should have seen the women, they looked like Tigers just about to kill their prey, barred teeth ect, nothing would stop them!!!*

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<sup>20</sup> Widow of Roger Werner (who died February 1957), one of my father's closest Assam friends.



1958



Alan in kilt, with Granny, Fiona and Anne, either

Iris to Alan, Wednesday 16th January 1958, Iris

*Dear Alan,*

*Thank you for your letter, glad you got safely over but I'm sorry to hear about the guitar string, it sounds as if it wasn't a very good model after all?! I do hope you can get it mended. I met Mr Doogan this morning and he said he had a very sticky journey through the fog, you got away just in time though as I should think the Sedbergh road is pretty deadly now.*

*Before I forget, yes, you can go down a coal mine at Easter, it sounds fun in a grim sort of way! It doesn't really matter which period you go for, but if it's in Yorkshire the 2nd period might be better and you could go straight onto School? What about the camp in the summer? If you can persuade any of your friends to go, I should go this year, as we might be back the following summer. I think you have to let Mr McDougall<sup>21</sup> know? All very arctic isn't it? I felt like Dr Fuchs when I crossed the field to the village yesterday falling into drifts and plodding over trackless expanses of snow. Juno simply adores it. You should get some skating very soon, I took the girls skates along to them but I don't know if Rydal will have frozen though I'm sure the Tarns must have. We watched the Wales v England Rugger on Telly a couple of days ago, I wish you could have seen the Welsh fly half Cliff Morgan. He was fantastic. I suppose Rugger is right out at the moment. The Manzi Fe's came down for a drink on Monday, they WALKED! He looked pretty fed up but Mrs seemed to enjoy the strange*

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<sup>21</sup> A Sedbergh Master.

experience. I blethered on a lot about our tennis court, private swimming pools etc. in Assam, they'll never get a chance to check up, so what! Anyway it's true up to a point. Mrs Grieve rang up to say she couldn't get over and that Alistair had failed 'O' level Maths for the 5th time! Stephen thoroughly enjoyed Switzerland, but will find Scotland much the same!

I'll ask Granny to get you "Exchange and Mart". Is it about the scooter? David says you're not allowed one till you're 17? I haven't forgotten the fishing licences and will get the money to you in time. By the way if the coal mine is anywhere near here, perhaps Campbell would like to spend a few days with you here.

#### Iris to Alan, Sunday 19th Jan 1958 Field Head

Dear Alan,

Herewith a few bits, take care of the gloves, they were quite expensive! The Skiffle book I'd ordered had most of the tunes you know - "Cumberland Gap", "Lost John", "Don't you rock me" and "It takes a Worried Man" so I got this one instead. I hope you disentangled the fishing rods from the guitars and the eggs hadn't scrambled themselves in your pyjamas. You got over just in time as the roads are glassy today and none of our guests have turned up - thank goodness. You should get some skating if this goes on, but I don't envy you your cold baths and blizzard runs!

I'll write a proper letter in a day or two, have also discovered an Atlas, do you want it? I might stay up for Top Twenty tonight - we had Elvis Presley on Telly last night and I predict his new song "Be nice to me" will rocket to the top - it's frightful! Much love - Mummy

23 Feb: Mrs Knappett and her daughter come to see T.V.

[Mrs Knappett lived about 15 minutes away]

#### Alan to parents, 30th March, Field Head

[The first part of the letter concerns school affairs, as I had just returned for the holidays and is included in 'Sedbergh Schooldays']

I hope to go and stay a few days with Ian Campbell (the boy who I took fishing) in Newcastle. Then he might come over for a few days in the summer. The girls are coming back tomorrow, probably well equipped with broken David Whitfield records and picture of Paul A\*uka with which to drive me out of the house. The flowers are terribly late this year and it looks as if there will be none to decorate the church with. The first trippers are infiltrating into Ambleside and no doubt there will be a few of them shouldering their packs ready for the delights of a wet Easter Week end. I hope all the animals keep well and that you have had some rain. I have collected my first bit of cash from the bank, it is quite a thrill, but I expect it will wear off in time. Thank you very much anyhow. Happy Easter! I will be writing again very soon,  
Lots of love, Alan

#### Alan to parents, 6 Apr 1958 Field Head

Dear Mummy and Daddy,

Happy Easter!! (I am afraid this will be about a week late but I did not have time to decorate my last letter as it had to catch the post. I am sorry about this biro (yours!) but the [drawing of a small fish - my sister Fiona's nickname] has taken a liking to my pen and so I cannot get near it. The fish [Fiona] is looking very swish [crossed through] in her new coat - the "swing" line so she tells me. As you have probably gathered I am not delving down coal mines this holiday. That is because the Coal Board had to refuse some people. I have not been able to do hardly any fishing as it is so cold - the fish wouldn't bite anyway. As you will probably be told several times yesterday (Easter Saturday) was the coldest Easter this century! Round London there was 6 ins of snow in places. It wasn't so bad here though. A bit cold - but quite nice. I went up onto Claipe Heights (Latterbarrow) to look for some tarns which I would be allowed to fish. I found about 10 lovely looking fishy ones but each one had a decrepit looking sign by it saying 'PRIVATE'! But I saw 3 lovely deer up there - a stag and two does. I don't know what kind they were - they were about the size of small horses and the stage

had lovely horns like this<sup>22</sup>. They stopped and watched me for a bit - about 50 yards away but then they tossed their heads and trotted off. At the moment I am looking around for a second-hand motorbike. I think a 98 c.c. James (very light indeed!) would be best you can get them under £25. They can only go about 35 mph downhill with a gale behind them, so I don't think I should want to overtake very much! The boy's companion (which is a book) says that a motor bike is the safest means of transport. And it would cost less than a half of the price of a bus to get into Ambleside. Have you still got what is left of the money from my electric trains as I may need it. We have as usual been glued to the screen. Actually I have spent most evenings in front of the fire in my room, either painting. (I have managed to finish my painting of the Perch, I think it is better than the one of the pike. I am now half way through one of some trout (monsters leaping in a tarn somewhere on Black Crag). We saw "The Great Adventure" on T.V. this afternoon - the Swedish film about an otter cub. I think Mummy saw it in February, anyhow it was a good film. I am now trying to sort out my thoughts from "Take it from here". Well I hope that at last it has rained. I wish we could swoop a bit of weather. The boat race was a bit disappointing wasn't it - Cambridge won - if you have not heard. The Oxford cox was at the Dragon my first year!

Lots of love, Alan

### Fiona to parents 11th Apr 1958 Field Head

My dearest Mummy and Daddy,

Thanks you heaps for your letter - received to-day. ...

... On Easter day, in the morning we went to church. It was a changable kind of day. We didn't go anywhere particularly. Actually I can't remember what I did! My memory! But I do so much I forget which day it is. We did watch Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race on 'Telly'. Mr and Mrs Elliot came and watched it too. You know the winner so I shan't dwell on that. Easter Night I saw Dickie Valentine on Telly. He was rather nice, but Granny kept saying how out of tune he was so I was put off. Actually I didn't watch the whole thing as I was making supper and had to keep rushing back to the kitchen... Most days I bring supper through to the drawing room, as you can't drag them away, but we do try and arrange it so as to get it between something somebody wants to watch. Mrs Knappett comes in lots to watch. I like her to come as she must get unbearably loansome up there all by herself. She likes to watch the programme, but mainly I guess its for company's sake. Sometimes I go up and see her, when Taking Juno for a walk, she is always gardening, being her only joy now. Rachael the lady who wrote the book came,<sup>23</sup> we went we lunch and they came here, I thought she was frighttfully nice, very friendly and killingly funny! She was super at mimicking things and we were all in fits about the Iris and her kids and all....

Our reports came. I think you'll be disapointed maybe with my maths... Yesterday we went into Kendal to do some shopping. You might have thought I'd have enjoyed it as we had to get heaps of clothes for school, but I couldn't. I felt so guilty having to get so much... I got a new record 'Niarobi' Tommy Steele's latest. Alan says its foul, but I like it. We met Angela and Robert and had lunch together. It was Robert's birthday. We all gave 2/6 each for a pair of socks for him. After that we went to the dentists. He asked after you. I missed you awfully, as I had no hand to clutch but I had only two titchy fillings which hurt a bit. Anne had quite a big one, and Alan had one and has to go in tomorrow to have one out. I got the book 'Doctor in Love' sequel to Doctor at Se etc, with my book token.

I saw Frankie Vaughan on Television. He was getting the 'Personality of the Year' award by the Variety Club. He was smashing needless to say. Also there was Alec Guinness getting 'Film Start of the Year' and his oscar which had been flown from America specially. Have you heard. Together with the producer he and the film 'The bridge on the River Kuai' (bring back any memories? Of a windy day in London?!) have got 7 oscars which decided to go for a walk. It is quite something...

This morning I woke early - 7-30! and as everyone else was asleep I decided to go for a walk... we got to the top of Black Crag and back by 9.30 which I thought was brilliant...

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<sup>22</sup> Small drawing of stag's head and antlers

<sup>23</sup> Rachel Knappett, author of *A Pullet on the Midden* and daughter of my grandparent's friend Mrs. Knappett.

*Alan is still dabbling about with motor bikes. He gets 10000's of catalogues everyday. he is going into Kendal to-day to have a look at two there. He is only getting a very light one not very dangerous.  
Anne is trying to make Juno jump [rest of letter -missing...]*

#### Alan to parents 16th Aug 1958, Field Head

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*Good news!! I am still alive! I think I have now nearly mastered the dreaded machine. I have been about 100 miles on it, including going via the ferry to Bowness and then on - via Ambleside and Windermere and back here. That was when I went on the Lake with Robert Angela, Bill and Julia and Anne and children. It was a lovely day and Robert managed to get us a good motorboat, a slow one but really safe, a smaller version (slightly) of the boats that churn around the lake with holiday makers. I don't know whether I have already told you what I am about to tell you but I better write it again in case I have not written it before. Excuse me if I did. I went out last Sunday on my motorbike, heading for the top of the Duddon (over Rhinos pass). It was a hot but thundery day and there were a considerable number of people driving up and down the pass. Of course some idiot got stuck halfway up, on one of the steep bits, so that there was a long line of cars waiting trying to pass the stalled car. This meant that I had to stop and then start on a steep gradient, as I could hardly start on the flat I was a bit worried, but a nice young man pushed me off so I was alright. Anyhow I reached the other side and parked at Cockley Bridge (you know, where the Hardknott road goes off). Then I walked about one third of the mile down the stream and started fishing. I was using a silver spoon and I was beginning to be a bit worried that there were no sea-trout when I came to a nice pool. It was about 30 ft long and about 6 ft deep and the strong currant swept under some overhanging trees; at my first cast I felt a terrific tug and out leapt a fat sea-trout. It dashed off for the bank and was nearly under it before I knew what was happening, but I just managed to head it off. I landed it in the pool below after an exciting fight. It was a lovely fat, fresh-run fish which I weighed later and found to be 1 lb 40z. Then a terrific storm began. The lightning flashed across the sky right overhead, the thunder nearly burst my ear drums! But it did not affect the fish as I went on to catch another sea-trout of 1lb 2 oz under the bridge. But what a ride back it was over Rhinos! I could hardly see any distance, the road was a river, and the wind blew the bike from side to side, but I reached home. The next day I went fishing there again, but this time I had no luck, apart from small trout. Then a few days later I went fishing on Windermere with Stephen and we caught a few small perch. For the last few days I have been sleeping at the Knappet's house as Billy etc are here. No doubt you will hear enough about the children from Anne and Granny, so I won't talk about them. I went fishing again yesterday in Satterthwaite about a mile below where we usually picnic, as I had heard there were sea trout in it, and by some fluke I got two sea trout of 1lb 4 oz and six and a half oz so now I know another good place - the bike has its results!*

*Lots and lots of love Alan*

#### Alan to parents, 5 Sep 1958, Field Head

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*Thank you very much for your last letter (about your visit to Shillong). I hope you are both very well and not minding the "High Society" too much. I am already beginning to think of what I should bring out to India to catch that 20 lb mahseer!! I suppose the best things are spoons? Could you please tell me anything else I need to bring, apart from rod and line etc. How heavy should the line be? And what coloured spinners, and what length etc? As you probably gathered from my last letter (if it was not too crumpled) I enjoyed "Camp"<sup>24</sup> very much indeed, I hope I can go there again next Easter. When are you and Daddy coming back? I am looking forward to the fishing and reminiscent holiday in Scotland already! We were at last beginning to have our summer at the end of the camp. Actually the weather of the whole camp was pretty good. But for the last four days it was simply beautiful. I went down to the sea several times, Poole Harbours (to go round the "Marines" there) and down to Studland. When we went down to Studland it was a particularly nice day. We could see the Isle of White with ease - a white gash on the skyline while the "Harry" rocks to our right were very clear-cut. We had a glorious view of Poole harbour on the way, and the sea was very blue and inviting, and also warm!! I bought*

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<sup>24</sup> Religious camp at Iwerne Minster.

*a bit of fishing tackle on the way there but I could not find any bait as the tide was right out. But I tried fishing with a bait of orange peel and silver paper, in the hope of a stray sand eel or lost lamprey, but to no avail. Just as we were leaving however I saw a lot of lug worms coming up - yes actually throwing up their casts - and I tracked one and caught it when it was doing this. But really it was a most enjoyable day. The motorbike is going very well and I think I have got it fairly (!) well taped, but I have still got to have the speedometer mended and the battery charged. I go out fishing sometimes now, just for the chance of riding the bike I enjoy it so much! Yesterday I went up to Kentmere but I didn't catch anything except 10 small trout and a moorhen. This moorhen hid in some weeds near the bank of the stream and let me pick it up, and then I let it go and it swam off under water. Today was again a nice day. Richard and I spent the morning picking apples off the big apple tree in the back garden. It had a bumper crop, and I reckon we have picked about 220 lbs (or £25) worth of apples off it. Also we have remarked the padder court. The guitar is going swimmingly. Lots of love,  
Alan*

# 1959

This is a thinly recorded year. So I will include more extracts from my grandfather's diary (and at the end a small part of my grandmother's diary, covering her operation early in the year).

## **Grandfather's diary 1959**

10 Jan  
Snow v cold  
Collinson say no sign of Alan's trunk

11 Jan  
V cold, Wrote to LPO Manchester re Alan's trunk

13 Jan  
Letter from Iris  
Violet goes to see her specialist in Lancaster  
She stays night with Gribbons  
Wrote to Iris and Richard  
Marriott has found Alan's trunk

14 Jan  
Violet returns  
Sent key of trunk to Marriott  
Library book chargeable

22 Jan  
Children arrive London and stay night with Robert

23 Jan  
Snow, Children home

Sunday 25 Jan  
Children leave for school

## **Spring holiday**

2 Apr  
Alan arrives home  
12-15 Fiona dentist and dance at Giggleswick Jane Entwistle

3 Apr  
Alan goes fishing

4 Apr  
Fiona returns

Sunday 5 Apr  
Children to church

Fiona to parents, 7 Apr 1959 Field Head

*My dilling Mim and Pap,*

*Thanks Mollians fur the litter mim...*

*It is a V. wet V. windy V. cold day. It been snowing (only very slightly)... I have been very busy since I have been back. Literally only been into the back garden....(clothes making)*

*I have completly grown out of my 24" Jeans (blue) so I will send a pattern for some... To-day David Fandy May (!) [David Manzi Fe] is coming over for tea - I have made Alan ring him up and ask him to bring over some records - I hope he has Gigi. The original plan was to go out on the lake - but the weather has put paid to that.*

*There is the usual flap packing all Alan's things. Poor thing!! I have been madly washing collars - pressing grey longs and trying to clean up filthy old blue blazers - really his blue blazer has had it - Its torn and filthy but it looks fairly presentable now. His new guitar is very swish and he's jolly good on it.*

*I am glad to hear about your idea of making those stories into a book. Am I called "Fiona" in the book? What about the temple? You said you would try and do something about it Mum and you to(o) Daddy (after several whiskies Ill admit).*

*I'm going to the station to see Alan and Ju[no] off tomorrow. I have begun to save 3d bits. When I have £1 I am going to put it into saving (P.) [Post Office]*

*I did quite a reasonable drawing of Juno yesterday. Its much easier ...*

*Haven't been over to the bods [Boddington's] for ages now. Not since before I went away. Mike and Simone have gone back. Poor old Tim I must go and see him. The tree house is almost completed - just needs the water tank filling and stocking with food then it will be completely livable in. Last time I went over I helped move fire wood (by trailer) Ju and Blob have fine games together. The daffodils are heavenly. They gave me a huge bunch to give to Granny - and some home-baked white bread - hot from the oven. Which of course Gran couldn't eat.*

*Miranda sounds so sweet....*

*Our room looks very gay now. I have got practically all the way covered in pictures, painting, photoes, maps, fans etc. And Anne has got the small white dressing table again. It such a nice light room this one. I am sitting at my little desk with all my writing things scattered around me. I am thinking of our room in India and my desk there. It all seems like a wonderful dream now - Oh I am so longing - WANTING - WANTING - WANTING you to come home. Please God make the time go quickly.*

*All my very best love*

*Your silly loving daughter - Fish xxxxx*

**Grandfather's diary**

8 Apr

Alan takes dog down to London

11 Apr

Card from Alan

13 Apr

4-15 Anne dentist

Richard arrives

14 Apr

Mrs Shaw writes that Juno is a great success and is having a good time at East Meon

15 Apr

Girls go back [to school]

18 Apr  
Drinks with Manzi Fe  
Alan returns

19 Apr  
Tea with D Knappett and her daughter

21 Apr  
Went to tea with Paul Bridson and saw Pixley  
Alan bikes to fish at Sedbergh

25 Apr  
Alan goes fishing at Sedbergh  
Planted out Sprouts  
Wrote to Bank

26 Apr  
10 am Alan dentist

28 Apr  
Manzi Fe has accident on his scooter

30 Apr  
Alan goes back  
Wrote to Annie

1 May 1959  
Wrote to Alan  
Letter from Billy from Maidwell - He has been awarded MBE

5 May  
Sent Appln for another road fund licence for Alan

26 May  
Violet's birthday

29 May  
Ambleside for school speech day and sports  
Girls come home

22 Jun  
Robert invited to try for All Souls Fellowship

27 June Violet and Margery visit Alan at Sedbergh.  
Wrote to Iris and Mary Lupton

4 Jul  
Robin and Adeleine give us lunch at High Hall and drive us to the Tarns and take strawberries to Alan

### **Summer Holidays 1959**



Tue 28 Jul  
Alan returns home  
Girls go to Scotland

29 Jul  
Alan goes to Kendal about bike

30 Jul  
Alan goes to Ambleside sports  
10 cwt coak received  
Drinks with Dorothy and family

Sat 1 Aug  
Violet and Alan go to Cinema

4 Aug  
Occulist 2 pm Brownlee  
Mrs Shaw arrives with Juno  
Fiona a returns

6 Aug  
Alan and Fiona go South<sup>25</sup>  
Billy Julia and family arrive

7 Sep  
Alan bikes to Newcastle  
Anne goes to Workington

10 Sep  
Alan's motor bike driving test which he failed

12 Sep  
Anne returns from near Workington  
Geoff Bromley arrives

14 Sep  
Alan and Geoffrey climb Coniston Old Man and Weatherlam with Juno

18 Sep  
Alan goes back to school with Geoff Bromley

19 Sep  
Last rain 13th August and before that 12th July

24 October  
Wrights leave <sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This was the start of my continental tour with Ian Campbell - see below

<sup>26</sup> Next-door neighbours, replaced by Buckmasters

4 Nov  
Buckmasters come into residence

Sat 7 Nov  
Fog - Robert to Sedbergh to lecture. Fiona plays hockey against Keswick  
Alan rugger against Rossall

Mon 9 Nov  
Robert lectures at Sedbergh

8 Dec  
Alan at Oxford<sup>27</sup> [Alan was trying for a Trevelyan Scholarship]

14 Dec  
Iris arrives

17 Dec  
Alan arrives

18 Dec  
Go to High Grassings

23 Dec  
Gribbons come to tea

27 December 1959 Iris to Mac  
*... Annie just flings shoes, orange peel and T.V. times around in a steady stream*

### **Grandmother's diary - her operation at the start of the year**

Tue 13 Jan: Went to Lancaster Infirmary and saw Mr Glennie. Mary fetched me and I spent the night with them, Annette and Angus tobogganed.

Wed 14 Jan: They took me to Carnforth where I caught bus and we went all round the county. V slippery

Wed 21 Jan: Trio left India

Thursd 22 Jan: Trio arrived in London and spent night with Angela and Robert

Fri 23 Jan: Went by taxi to Windermere to meet trio who were brown and cheery

Sat 24 Jan: Alan went skating and the girls and I busy washing and packing

Sun 25 Jan: Finished packing and went by taxi to Windermere and Alan caught bus to Sedbergh and left girls at Fairfield

Monday 26 Jan : Had letter from Blackpool. I am to be at hospital 11 15. Will went to Windermere for money and I washed and ironed and got things ready

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<sup>27</sup> Alan was trying for a Trevelyan Scholarship

Tue 27 Jan: Taxi 7-30 train 8-10 arrived Blackpool hosp: 10.35. Had to wait for hours for bed and had nothing to eat or drink. Down for 1st op: at 7.45. Another later. V sore mouth and tongue

Wed 28 Jan: A bit battered and I am to have the big op: on Friday

Thurs 29 Jan: On verandah and feeling better and allowed ordinary food - Will arrived and staying at New Central Hotel

Frid 30 Jan: Nothing to eat and all the routine hospital preparation. Injection half hour before op: and made me feel relaxed and carefree - Red haired young man anaesthetist - went out like a candle.

Sat 31 Jan: Not very conscious with oxygen and intravenous feeding and water down tubes in my nose. Will came.

Sat 14 Feb: Home by ambulance

# The Trevelyan Scholarship Tour Round Europe

## August 12 - September 3rd 1959

I had decided to combine my first expedition abroad (and without adults) with a project to enter for the Trevelyan Scholarship at Oxford. The planning seems to have begun in March.

Comments about the Continental Tour by Iris in letters from India

24 March 1959

*I think it would be a good idea to go to the Continent. Wish we could finance you but one way and another are very pressed at the moment, also I told Fiona we couldn't finance her trip to Italy which means I can't very well finance yours. Would it be very hard to take your motorbike, or has Campbell not got one? The idea of walking with one of those vast packs on your back is rather grim. I read an article about fishing in France somewhere, will try and find it.*

23 May 1959

*I do hope your trip to the continent will come off, I think the kilt an excellent idea but the plastic mac in an envelope probably a mistake, I remember hearing a funny description of a walking tour on the wireless and they spent their whole time trying to get their macs back into the envelopes and then deciding, when it started to rain, if it was worth getting them out again. I should think your grey wind cheater would be better, and if its deluging you can shelter.*

*The great thing is comfortable shoes or boots, your first aid kit should just be sticking plaster, scissors, antiseptic, and aspirin - you'll be able to get other things on the way. Also I shouldn't bother with provisions except perhaps some Horlicks tablets or a few Oxo cubes to make a drink if you're absolutely stuck, I'm sure you'll always get milk and eggs and rolls and fruit along the way. We should be paying £10 for your keep and pocket money for that time so could contribute, and if you can earn five that would see you through.*

*I should go in September when the weather is usually better and the crowds less. If you managed to get a few photographs you could probably write an article. In the Steps of the Poet or something which would pay for the whole thing!*

5 July 1959

*I'll do my best to get the shirt home via Cappie, other wise you'll have to get one at home. Do hope the wonderful weather will hold through the holidays, it will make all the difference to your trip, though trudging along in a temperature of 90 degrees won't be so much fun. You can sit under haystacks and drink wine, and I hope send us lots of postcards. Do you have to follow Wordsworth every step of the way?*

13 July 1959

*Do hope that by the time this arrives your ordeal will be over and you'll be enjoying your two weeks of blissful respite. Am longing to hear how you found it. Cappie says he will take the shirts, and we will send £25 for the trip, which I expect will seem a reasonable sum by the H.M. Absolutely all we can rise to I'm afraid, so if you run out you'll have to leave Wordsworth and hurry home! Or you might be able to help in some French harvesting.*

20 July

*I've just got your letter about the exam, and am truly sorry for you, but by this time you will be revelling in the aftermath. Cappie says he will take the shirts (one white and one green) so I hope you won't have to buy*

anything else for your trip. The currency restrictions make life very difficult as we can only send a certain amount home each month and in the months when there are school bills it leaves nothing over - and the school bills seem to drag on for most of the year! Anyway I hope you won't be short. Let us know when you are due to start and give us a rough stretch of your route so that we know whereabouts you will be on what days, not having read Wordsworth's account and having lost the previous map you sent me.  
Much love and good fishing - if there's any water? Mummy

Alan to parents 3 August 1959, Field Head

Dear Mummy and Daddy,

I hope my birthday present has arrived at last! Thank you very much for your last letter which arrived on the day before we broke up from school. Now it is exactly six days after we broke up. I have had a pretty busy holidays so far - or so it seems. I seem to have been rushing around from place to place in a frantic hurry without actually doing anything much. However I did manage to get to the Ambleside Sports (which is quite a big affair - with prizes up to £65 (just for springing 100 yards!) It was at the Rydal Park place and quite a nice day Then on Saturday evening I went with Granny to the Ambleside flicks as "The Great Dictator" was on, it was wonderfully funny - I expect you have seen it. The scene where they are choosing who is going to murder the dictator is an absolute scream - Ambleside has been pretty crowded lately, and of course on Bank Holiday Saturday there was quite a long queue for the cinema. We waited for about half an hour and then found that the cinema was not nearly full. We also found ourselves placed behind too very large heads, and Granny not having the experience I had received from school films found herself with a cricked neck. Talking of films we had a rather good one on the last Monday of term called "Bachelor of Hearts" with Hardy Kruger and Jean Simmons - it was very light and amusing about the social side of Cambridge life, rags etc. I am hoping to see one more film in this vein before I lose myself to the world for four weeks. This film is also on at Ambleside (I don't know what's come over the Cinema - as you know normally they manage to get the worst possible films when there are tourists) - the film I have been talking about is "The Reluctant Debutant" which is supposed to be most amusing.

It looks as if there is going to be a generally chaotic three days ahead of us The plan is  
-i Tuesday afternoon - Fiona arrives from Scotland (to be met) (Grandpa has to go to Kendal)

ii Tuesday evening - Pim arrives for dinner (later I go to film)

iii Wednesday - Fiona and I get organised (we hope)

iv Thursday morning - fish and I go down South- Juno is dropped at Kennel  
- Julia, Billy and kids arrive - poor Granny!

Before I forget here is a map of our course. We are starting on the 12th of August and hoping to end on the 2nd of September. This is roughly the route - but we will probably have to take short cuts or change it in other ways.

Before I forget here is a map of our course. We are starting on the 12th of August, and hoping to end on the 2nd of September. This is roughly the route - but we will probably have to take short cuts



change it in other ways if it is too long. (a) is a route we hope to take if we can get a barge down the Rhine - otherwise we will have to head across country. As you can see it is a very ambitious trip - but we will do our best. Will be writing soon - and also once we get going I will send lots of postcards.

Hope all is fine out there - I mustn't hold up Granny any more - she is in a bit of a flap - !!  
Lots of love Alan.

(a) is a route we hope to take if we can get a barge down the Rhine - otherwise we will have to head across country. As you can see it is a very ambitious trip - but we will do our best. Will be writing soon - and also once we get going I will send lots of postcards.

Hope all is fine out there - I mustn't hold up Granny any more - she is in a bit of a flap - !!

Lots of love, Alan

My mother wrote on 27th Aug 1959 from Cherideo

*My dear Alan,*

*I think you will have returned by now, and this letter will find you with the friend, the yacht (where?) at least I hope so. So far we have heard nothing of your travels, I hope this is a good sign and doesn't mean that you lost your Traveller's Cheques on arrival, we are dying to hear how you fared though. I think you have probably sent a letter by sea mail.*

*Your wonderful birthday parcel arrived a couple of days ago, full of the most delicious surprises and a lovely letter, thank you very much for everything. The green eye shade is exactly what I want for my painting expeditions, and Donne of course I adore, and have always wanted. I hope you'll "do" him because he's a difficult poet and one you can read again and again, understanding a bit more each time. I was very touched at being compared to a violet by a mossy stone - at the moment bear more resemblance to the stone actually!*

*I was surprised you weren't complimentary about Wordsworth's "there was a roaring in the wind" which I always think a wonderful description of a lake district morning. [NOTE] "And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters" is a lovely line. My favourite of Wordsworth's sonnets is "The world is too much with us" perhaps because I agree with the sentiments. I liked your poem very much by the way, the one about the blue flower whose colours ran over the landscape, a most original idea. I will send you my latest verse in this, it only has two good lines I think, do you agree and which are they?!*

*What fun that you like poetry, so few people do, we shall be able to thrash it all out when I come home, though I am rather rusty on things like "conceits". Your exam papers struck us as being fearfully difficult, in fact we could not answer a single question between us, what is a "pass" by the way? I'm sure you'll have got through, does AS mean Advanced and Scholarship level?*

*We also liked your essay on "our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting" very much, I would go further and say that not only do we carry our past round with us, but that every decision we have made has changed us, so that in fact we are our past. But then I don't believe that "I" am an unalterable lump of something who comes into life and goes out of it untouched by everything that has happened. I am not the same person I was ten years ago, and I'll be something different again in another twenty, so which is me? All very difficult, sometimes in a flash of understanding one has the answer, but it seems to slip out of reach of words...*

When I returned from the tour, I wrote a long description to my parents, based on a rough diary of the tour I had kept.

5 September Field Head

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*I want to give you a detailed account (with the aid of my diary) of our journey. I think it is going to be by a long way the longest letter I have ever written, and perhaps one of the longest you have received?  
I have only been back home one day (in case you are still muddled I went sailing for a week before the trip).*

The second half of the letter from Lakes on 5 September 1959<sup>28</sup>

*I am telling you all the news etc here at the beginning because later I want to give you a detailed account (with the aid of my diary) of our journey. I think it is going to be by a long way the longest letter I have ever written, and perhaps one of the longest you have received?*

*I have only been back home one day (in case you are still muddled I went sailing for a week before the trip). The weather has been bone dry apparently, and of course the farmers are all now weeping for rain. The Duddon, when I went over there this afternoon to look at it, was just a trickle - no bigger than black beck and the fish seemed to have buried themselves among the stones.*

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<sup>28</sup> The first half contains matter to do with School Exams and has been put in the volume on *Sedbergh Schooldays*

*Tomorrow I am going to spend the morning at Brathay trying to cheer up poor Mike Doogan. Apparently he is rather bored because he can't do anything.*

*This evening I am going to celebrate my exam results by going to see a film which I have wanted to see for a very long time "King Creole" - with that "hep" "Cat" Elvis Presley. We have the record at school and it is really quite "cool" (I will give you an explanation of any of these words which you don't when you come back.) Also I believe that the audiences in these rock'n roll films are equally worth watching.*

*I am continuing after seeing the film! I was surprised not to find the cinema particularly full. The actual film was mainly a series of interludes of Elvis singing some rock n' roll number with a rather imbecile grin on his face and jerking backwards and forwards in a most odd fashion; alternatively one would come to the type of scene where Elvis was surrounded by a gang of thugs and was beating them all up. Despite this however I enjoyed the film very much indeed - especially the music. Although I felt it to be most non-u' I could not restrain my feet from tapping! The Ambleside audience were most lethargic however, not even one little scream or sob did I hear!*

*I am glad to hear that the book is still going strong - by the way would you tell me some details about it - at the moment I am even hazy about its subject. If I could help in any way - such as correcting spelling mistakes (although my spelling as you know is pretty shocking!) I would love to.*

*I am glad also to learn that your (Mummy's) painting is progressing well. Would it be cheaper if I bought paints back here and sent them out to you? If so which colours would you like me to get you and what size? I do hope Daddy, you are not working yourself too hard, we have a lot of trout to catch next summer!*

*I am relieved to hear that the Chinese stuff is not a serious menace to you. I had visions of you sitting in a Chinese concentration camp!*

*I hope by now that my 7 (or was it 8?) Post Card's have reached you. Every letter I get says "no news from Alan I hope he is safe." Ian took quite a few photos, I will send any good ones on to you. At last I am about to start an account of our journey. do you think you could keep it, because I might want to see it again one day - well we are off!*

*P.S. I am writing the next bit perch-fishing in Windermere. every time I get a bite I will put a [ladder sign - put in the text as \$]*

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE TOUR**

This is an appendix to a letter to my parents written from Field Head on September 5<sup>th</sup> 1959. Handwritten in pen and partly taken from a diary, in two parts, starting in a red 'Lion Brand' Memo Book, and continued in another notebook. (There are little symbols interspersed – as explained in the accompanying letter, these indicate that a fish as bitten – they have been omitted. I was obviously combining float fishing and writing the letter.)

There is supplementary material to the letter in the Diary which I kept on the tour, which is often more detailed, but I have omitted this as it in a different 'voice' to the letter, whose integrity should be maintained.

(August 12<sup>th</sup> – September 3<sup>rd</sup>)

## **EXPEDITION WORDSWORTH**





Explorers Ian Campbell (17.7)

Alan Macfarlane (17.7)

(A factual account taken from their diaries)

“Tis not my present purpose to retrace  
That variegated journey step by step:  
A march it was of military speed,  
And earth did change her images and forms  
Before us fast as clouds are chang’d in Heaven.”

(W. Wordsworth – Descriptive Sketches)

Having spent the previous evening at Dover Y.H. we started off in the morning drizzle for the ferry. The boat was to leave at 1.05 and by the time we were on board the weather had cleared and it was a fine breezy day. We had an exhilarating trip across. The white cliffs of England receded in the distance, looking like a thin ice-cream wafer on the sparkling sea. The seagulls hovered and swooped, “off, off forth on swing as a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow bend” (Hopkins)

At last we backed carefully into Calais and it was certainly an exciting moment for me when I took my first steps on French soil. We had met a very pleasant French student at Dover and at the station

he brought us some wine (I had made a secret promise that if we ever arrived back alive and with some money we would have some more wine there on the way back.)

After searching round Calais for a lorry to Paris (we just missed one by 5 minutes) we set off on the road for Paris. Calais itself did not seem unlike an English town, though perhaps slightly gayer than Dover. We had crossed in blazing sunshine but when we arrived a typical English misty rain set in. However nothing could damp our spirits which was very enthusiastic because we were off at last. It was fortunate for us that we were in this mood for the road was very long and straight. After about an hour we stopped to have a glass of wine in a little village inn. We sat at a little table outside and drunk to our journey (at about 4d a glass.)

I won't bore you with the details of the two lifts we finally got which lands us up some 40 miles down the coast near Le Touquet (an aerodrome), past Boulogne. The only incident of interest that happened on this stretch was our encounter with two escaped (or freed) prisoners. They were standing on the other side of the road as the dusk was setting in. They beckoned us across the road, and hoping it might be someone who could offer us a lift we went. As far as I could understand they had been let out of prison the day before (they showed us tattooed handcuffs on their wrists) and they wanted some money. But magically both all my French and pigeon English went out of my head and I put on my most idiotic expression and repeated "je ne comprends" (in a very bad accent) 'till they gave up in despair and we went off – most thankfully.

As I said we landed up near Le Touquet on a smallish road, with the rain sheeting down, and the nearest Y.H. some 10 miles away. We tried, though it was dark to get to the Y.H by thumbing, but it was of no use so we had to bed down in our sleeping bags under a bench in a kind of bus shelter (but it only had a roof). Half an hour later some hitchhikers from Liverpool (2 lads of about 20) joined us and slept on top. It was a fairly uncomfortable night for the rain dripped just near my head and consequently sprayed at thin jet of sand (of which the floor was made) onto me. I felt like a sand dune when I awoke!

#### Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August

Today we are making for Paris (I have decided to write in the present tense) where Ian's parents are spending a week's holidays. We have lost our good spirits of the previous evening (thanks to the fact that as we eat breakfast, our eyes gummed by sand, and the buns we are eating very stale, the rain is again falling and the country is dull and overcast.) We are having a very hard days hiking, the lifts though frequent are all very short I think we must have about 12 by now, and now we are on the last lap, driving in to Paris at about 9.30 in the evening. In many of the cars we have been given lifts in the occupants have not been able to speak English, therefore we have to try to make conversation in our school-taught French. I think the drivers must get some amusement out of it although they very politely only smile. A typical sort of mistake was when I asked one serious couple whether they had come from boulangerie (a baker) – what I really meant was, have you come from Boulogne!

We get lifts from a good assortment of people, business men, farmer's helpers, priests, even a couple of yanks (but more of them later!)

We had a bit of trouble finding the Y. Hostel but at last we found it (P.S. I can't keep up this present tense stuff – too much of a strain) at 10.30. We were worn out, blistered and alone in Paris in a tough looking boulevard and so imagine our feelings when we read on the door the sign Complete, Full Up etc! Our heart's sank a mile and we were just about to go and sleep on the bench outside when another lad came past us and went in. A few seconds later he shouted out to us, "its alright it's not full". Apparently it was a joke of the warden to put up this notice, it must have tickled his sense of humour enormously to think of all the people who had been turned away late at night onto the tender mercies of Paris!

I was not surprised to learn that this Y. Hostel had a very bad reputation, and was popularly known as "The Toilette", this was from the fact that it was a small single storied, cement building on an island in the middle of a main boulevard. As you can imagine it was fairly noisy that night!

#### 15<sup>th</sup> August

It would take me a book to tell you all the thing we saw in Paris but I will just mention them by name. We met Mr and Mrs Campbell and having breakfast with them near their Hotel – the Bedford (at a typical little boulevard café, outside in the sun under the chestnuts – very parisien I thought.)

We walked past the Tuilerie gardens, which were beautiful though rather formal for my British tastes. We then went to the Champs d'Élysée which is supposed to be more beautiful at night. We also

visited the Arc de Triomphe – where I thought the grave of the unknown soldier with its inscription “Here lies a soldier of France who died for his country” very moving. We also tried to go to the Louvre but found it was shut for the day.

In the evening Ian’s parent[s] very kindly took us both to see an opera at the comic opera house. It was a fairly light one (though it had a tragic ending) and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Some of the singing was magnificent. It was not a famous one – it was called “Mireille”. We did not get to sleep till about 2.0!

### 16<sup>th</sup> August Sunday

We slept the night at the Bedford hotel and after a continental breakfast we went off to continue our tour of Paris. We had seen the Eiffel tower (fairly close anyhow) so we decided to go to the Louvre. Firstly we went to the Impressionist part where we saw paintings (all originals of course) by Paul Cézanne, Camille Pissaro, Sisley, Suerat, Signac, Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh (including the one of the crooked looking church), Rousseau, Toulouse Lautrec, Monet, Degas, Corot, Renoir, Manet just to mention the more famous. We only had time to spend about 2 and a half hours here, but I think it was my favourite bit of the Louvre. (By the way have you ever been to Paris?)

We headed, after a good meal, for the Louvre proper. It would take year to look at most of the pictures here and so I cannot hope to give you much idea of it. There were chambers and corridors full of the most wonderful sculptures and paintings. There were mosaics, Egyptian sphinxes, even a throne room. All was laid out in the most sumptuous manner and illuminated in the most discreet yet clear way. Among the Greek and Roman statues I especially liked the death of Laocon. Here is a list of the more famous painters whose originals we saw.

Leonardo da Vinci (inc Mona Lisa – terrific. A crowd of course). [then follows a list of about 30 famous painters...] Quite a collection! Far too much to absorb in one viewing – after a time one became overwhelmed and could not take in any more. Although I enjoyed many of the paintings none of them gave me a great thrill. I have decided that I receive far more pleasure through the ears in poetry and music than through the eyes. I am ashamed to admit that for sheer pleasure (not snob value), I would prefer an L.P. of say Dvornak’s “New World Symphony” than an original Raphael. But then I love music.

We then went for a walk by the Seine, and saw an artist and pavement (organ) grinder and the quaint old bridges. Later we said goodbye to the Campbell’s and feeling rather lonely, and a little scared set off on our journey proper!

At this rate I have calculated it will take another 60 odd sheets to tell you of the rest of the journey so I will cut profusely because I don’t think my nervous system would bear the strain of writing an 80 side letter. Also I should think it is pretty boring for you.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Section* (I advise you to have a rest after the first!)

### 17<sup>th</sup> Monday

We spent the morning in the grounds of Versailles. It is a magnificently imposing park, with a formal though very impressive lay-out of fountains, avenues and staircases. I hope you will have an idea of it from the P.C I sent. At 2.30 we left and set out for Lyons. We found the road crammed with hitchhikers and were therefore very pessimistic about our chances of getting a lift. But after meeting up with a very pleasant Irish lad we got a lift in a very comfortable car for some 150 miles. And the man (who fortunately spoke English) even paid for a very expensive supper and drinks for us all. He dropped us at 10<sup>ish</sup> at Chalon Sur Saone for the night.

### 18<sup>th</sup> Tuesday

We were still rushing on our way and the three of us (Irishman included) got a lift with 6 Italian workman in the back of a van down to Lyon. They were tough looking characters who did not understand English or French but we sang “Volare”, and “Poppa Piccolino” quite amicably, and arrived at Lyons at about 2.0.

I think it is now time to bring in a little Wordsworth to raise the tone of this letter, after all we were following the man! [Me and Ian – especially on hot days when the lights were difficult used to sweat just to think of old Wordsworth plodding the 1600 odd miles he must have gone. It was hard enough

with lifts. Still he only had a handkerchief to carry all his belongings – not a pesky great haversack with a large sleeping bag!]

We, like Wordsworth, were on the look out for a place where Happiness might be found. He described the place as

"a spot of holy ground, ....  
Where falls the purple morning far and wide  
In flakes of light upon the mountain-side.  
Where with loud voice the power of water shakes  
The leafy wood, or sleeps in quiet lakes."

Como, Lugano and the top of the Rhone probably fitted this description best (though I maintain that Wordsworth really dreamt of the Lake District!)

Some of Wordsworth's thoughts were not wholly applicable however, for instance he said "back from his (the walker's) sight no bashful children steal; / He sits a brother at the cottage meal; / His humble looks no shy restraint impart; / Around him plays at will the virgin heart."

Perhaps it was because we were wearing kilts, but for some reason the villagers (as well as people in towns) were astonished to see us. When we passed little girls would stare open-eyed for a bit then run to fetch their mother, and they would stand and watch us agape! Anyhow I am glad we gave them some amusement.

Wordsworth did not have to say much about France as far as natural beauty goes (probably because there were no mountains). His lines

"... her files of road-elms, high above my head  
In long-drawn vista, rustling in the breeze;  
and "Among the vine-clad hills of Burgundy" just about describes the scenery.

At first in the North and just South of Paris we travelled through flat agricultural country. the country is very rich, and the acres of corn hang, reflecting back the sweltering heat. But as we drove down in the evening the colours seemed to mellow. We went through the Burgundy country, wave upon wave of vine-covered hills or else thickly wooded slopes. We drove down the long misty corridors of elms, the elphin moon climbing up from the forests; it sparkled silver on the Rhone at Chalon where we were staying at the Y. Hostel.

But to continue. After we had sat by the Rhone under the trees and written some P.C's (I hope you got them!) with the blue water surging strongly past between its cement banks we headed for Geneva. Passing through many little dusty villages, with their flat-roofed, white walled, houses we reached the foothills as it was growing dark (the Jura mountains).

We arrived in a little town, miles from the nearest Y.Hostel (according to the map) and wondering what to do. We were directed towards a Y. Hostel which according to our guide was "pas loin." Then began a good 3 mile walk! We were on a side road and I admit I felt slightly nervous as the darkness set in. The hills rose craggy straight up above us. Their lower slopes thick with vines – the grapes hanging in bunches (most temptingly) along the wayside. The wind rustled and sighed down into the wooded valley where the air was thick with the burr of crickets. If we had not been tired and growing sceptical it would have been a wonderful walk. At first there was only darkness then a faint glow showed up the outline of a nobbly peak which stood a thousand feet above us jutting into the night. The glow grew until we could see every tree outlined, then with an icy majesty the full moon flowed out from behind the pitchy crag, and hung a globe of silver. Soon our road lay like a glimmering pool of water reflecting the moon, and we would catch glances of it through a delicate silvery lacework of branches. It was very beautiful.

At last we arrived at what the yokel had called in a burst of enthusiasm, a Youth Hostel. Fortunately our suspicions had been aroused by its position up a series of foul-smelling little streets. We walked into what looked like a barn and homely (perhaps!) but rather disconcerting scene met our eyes. The smallish room had a low ceiling, and a big fireplace in one corner. It was lit by a naked electric light and the table in the middle was piled high with painting utensils. The floor was thick with ash and wood choppings and the air with the smell of paint. A couple of people, a girl of about 20 and a man slightly older were talking French in one corner. We were just wondering whether to flee from this awful debris when they addressed us in English!

Apparently they were both English, and owing to the fact that their decrepid car had broken down they had decided to spend the night (and the following 3 weeks there!). They were faced with at least 2 more weeks before the spare part would arrive. Having drunk some coffee which they had brewed up

in a pan which contained still a large amount of swede soup they pointed out our luxurious dormitory upstairs.

Apparently the hostel had one little room, in which they slept (I don't know whether they were married). Another bedroom was also used as a lavatory and they advised us never to go in there. The alternative was the attic. This had no light. The floor boards were inclined to give way and I more than once put my foot through them. Just to encourage us the English couple warned us that there were mosquitoes, millipedes several inches long that moved silently hornets (3 bites could kill you we were told) and rats. To add to this there was only one very knobby and rickety bed which I grabbed! We were very very thankful to escape next morning, not a bite the worse!

### 19<sup>th</sup> Wednesday

We journeyed the next day among glorious scenery. The road wound deviously between steep thickly wooded hills – jutting out in bare crags, and splotched with precipices, between them frothed the Rhone.

We reached Geneva that afternoon, and in the evening we saw the fountain illuminated (it is some 300 ft high I think) – I think also I sent you a P.C of it.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Thursday

The country around Geneva (at the lower end at least) is flatter than the higher part – and unfortunately there was a haze which prevented us seeing the higher Alps and Mont Blanc. We had great difficulty in getting a lift, but after 3 hours in the baking sun we got a lift all the way up the lake. It was an inspiring ride. The mist was hanging over the lake and so at first we could not see the other side, but as the valley narrowed, the mountains crowding in upon us on our side, out of the mist on the other side arose the spectral shapes, as in a dream, of the higher Alps. They stood a line of dark-grey sentinels, gravely brooding over the light-grey lake. The mountains on our side rose steeply forest-clad, but occasionally through them one could see a higher range with patches of snow on it. I reached Martigny my mind full of the power and repose of the mountains that soared and trembled about me.

By this time it had started raining and we arrived at a Y. Hostel at Sion with it pouring down.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Friday

We had a long and exciting journey to make today, we were going to cross the Simplon pass which so much impressed Wordsworth who wrote:- “From the striking contrast of it's features, this pass I should imagine to be the most interesting in the Alps.”

We were most fortunate to get a lift almost straight away off from a Swiss man in a strong car (Chevrolet) who was going straight over the pass. He spoke English well (being a rubber planter who was just returning to Singapore). We had with them a wonderful drive of over 4 hours. Firstly we drove up to the top of the valley to Brigue then we climbed steadily up some 5,000 feet (!) to the top. I don't think you would have enjoyed the drive much because we spent the whole time winding up a very bendy road which often had no fence and below there were great precipices. We passed many doors into the mountain which were the secret defence fortresses (guns etc) of the Swiss – they are very militarily minded). The road zig-zagged up among the pines. The surface was at times good, but often it was just being made and was only wet mud. At times we would go through short tunnels with streams gushing over us. How my heart did ache for poor old Wordsworth, no wonder he felt a bit odd after climbing up that lot (he had a vision at the top of the pass). Above us the lofty peaks towered gigantic into the clouds, below us in the dizzy distance the little town we had left nestled in the crook of the valley.

When Wordsworth came up he must have been very impressed by the mountains, in so many ways like the Lake District, yet on a far greater scale. When he reached the top it happened that he took the wrong path and chancing on a shepherd boy he was told that “he had crossed the Alps!” This sent him into a deep trance, and it seemed to unblock the fountain of his poetry. This is what he said of it. It is very difficult to understand, but remember the context. (To be omitted on the 1<sup>st</sup> reading!)

“Imagination! Lifting up itself  
Before the eye and progress of my Song

Like an unfather'd vapour; here that Power,  
 In all the might of its endowments, came  
 Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud,  
 Halted, without a struggle to break through.  
 And now recovering, to my Soul I say  
 I recognise thy glory; in such strength of usurpation, in such visiting  
 Of awful promise, when the light of sense  
 Goes out in flashes that have shown to us  
 The invisible world doth Greatness make abode,  
 There harbour whether we be young or old.  
 Our destiny, our nature; and our home  
 Is with infinitude, and only there;  
 With hope it is, hope that can never die  
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,  
 And something evermore about to be.”

Then we started to journey down the other side, and of course as we approached “Sunny Italy” it began to rain! However it fitted perfectly the description Wordsworth gave to this part of the journey. Sorry to quote him at you the whole time but he describes things so much better than I ever could (This describes the gorge we came down in)

“We enter'd ....  
 Into a narrow chasm; the brook and road were fellow-travellers in this gloomy pass  
 (Terrific poetry!) .....the immeasurable height  
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed  
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls  
 And every where along the rent  
 Winds thwarting winds, bewilder'd and forlorn,  
 The torrents shooting from the (clear blue) sky,  
 The rocks that mutter'd close upon our ears  
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside  
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
 The unfetter'd clouds, and region of the Heaven  
 Tumult and Peace, the darkness and the light  
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
 Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
 The types and symbols of Eternity,  
 Of first and last, and midst, and without end.”

(Great stuff isn't it?)

It was indeed very wild and impressive with the great slabs of rock disappearing up vertically into the swirling mist above our heads.

Having got out of this ravine by lunch-time we crossed lake Maggiore by Steamer and arrived at about 9.0 that evening at Como.

#### Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>

This morning we decided to have a day sunning ourselves by the Lake. But of course the weather could not allow this so it poured down from 11.0 onwards, so we spent a rather frowsty day in the hostel. I spent most of the day either practicing my mouth-organ or singing in a skiffle session with someone else's guitar.

#### Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>

Though it showered in the morning we decided we would go up the Lake on a boat. By the time we had started however there were beams of sunshine breaking through the clouds. It was a magnificent ride up the wooded lake. In some ways the lake is like Windermere, but the chestnut wooded slopes rise much higher on each side. There were a lot of villages, perched like clumps of

white toadstools on the steep slopes. Some of the villages we stopped at were very quaint with their little bridges, tilted churches and waterfalls. In the distance arose the jagged Alps.

We left the lake halfway up and went to Lugano, which looked very beautiful, though the town was a small-sized Blackpool.

#### Monday 24<sup>th</sup> (I am getting brief – I want to keep under 40 sides)

We set off today via Locarno towards N. Switzerland. After a longish wait we were lucky again to get a lift at about 1.0 from an English-speaking Swiss who was going to Zurich, some 5 hrs drive. He was a very pleasant man and in between looking at the marvellous scenery we had a very pleasant conversation with him. We went over the St Gothard pass which though less impressive than the Simplon (it is also some 6,000 ft up) is very exciting. It is rather like a Lake District pass. A steep S bending road winding up a bare hillside – a large scale Hardnott (some 20 S's!). We passed alongside Lakes, and through pine gorges on the other side – typical Canadian country. Switzerland really is beautiful. Then we came out into the flat rich plans of the North. Past Luzern to Zurich where we were dropped at the Y.H.

#### Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup>

After going to an interesting flower show in the boiling heat we then hitched to Konstanz where we had been told there was a v.g. hostel. When we arrived the warden said that we were not allowed because it was for parties of boys (it was in German) we were just about to despair when some German lads persuaded him to let us stay. That evening we saw the lights on the banks of the Rhine, they were a beautiful sight, shimmering on the water, contrasted with the glowing yellow of the lamps among the trees on the boulevard.

#### Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>

We spent the day sunbathing and swimming and absent mindedly watching pretty girls in bikinis trying to attract attention (“putting on the style”) – it was quite amusing. We both got fairly brown, a pity we had to move on as it is a lovely place. The lake was beautifully warm, and the sun so hot! In the evening I joined in with the German party in a sing-song with a mixture of German folk-songs and Tom Dooley!

#### Thursd 27<sup>th</sup>

I am going to race through the rest. We regretted our sunbathing on our way to Basel, especially as it was a very hot day and the lifts were difficult to come by. But in the end we got to Basel at about 6.0 in the evening having seen the Rhine falls which were quite impressive.

#### Friday 28<sup>th</sup>

We spent the morning trying to get a lift in a barge down the Rhine to Cologne. However apparently it is illegal so we could not get one. We therefore decided to go back via Paris. It took us 2 days to get there, having spent one night on a camping sight, one in a little hotel. The country was quite pleasant, though not outstanding.

#### Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>

We arrived at Paris at about 6.0 in the evening, with approx 2/- in cash and all the banks shut so we thought! But fortunately there was a place where we could cash our travellers check at an airport station. Then we went to look for a place to sleep. We were first landed up at a quarter called “Pigalle” (or the station was). It seemed a pretty sordid place, with all the night-clubs etc and the Y. Hostel there did not look particularly nice either – However we found a good U.N.E.S.C.O hostel where we stayed.

#### Monday 31<sup>st</sup>

I spent today quietly strolling around Versailles, and sunbathing.  
(I have to finish on this page!)  
(I got the nos. muddled therefore I have overstepped my limit).

#### Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup>

We hitched towards Calais – and after various lifts (and also a short train journey!) we reached Boulogne in the evening.

Wed 2<sup>nd</sup>

Spent today (once we had reached Calais) buying presents etc. (By the way I have given the others their presents (Granny a bit of wine, Grandpa some cheese etc) – Mummy's is a little scent – Daddy's a bottle of cherry Brandy – I will keep them 'till you come back). We got the 4.0 ferry which was pleasantly rough. Then we got the 6.30 train to London. Then after a good dinner (our first real meal of the day – apart from the wine in celebration at Calais). I caught the 10.50 express to Windermere. I arrived at 8.0 on Thurs morning just to catch Fiona on her way to some friend. That is all – I hope it was worth waiting for. (P.S. no illness, & 28/6 left over!) Lots of love, Alan

\*

Second half of a letter from Alan in the Lakes on 5 September 1959<sup>29</sup>

*I am telling you all the news etc here at the beginning because later I want to give you a detailed account (with the aid of my diary) of our journey. I think it is going to be by a long way the longest letter I have ever written, and perhaps one of the longest you have received?*

*I have only been back home one day (in case you are still muddled I went sailing for a week before the trip).*

*The weather has been bone dry apparently, and of course the farmers are all now weeping for rain. The Duddon, when I went over there this afternoon to look at it, was just a trickle - no bigger than black beck and the fish seemed to have buried themselves among the stones.*

*Tomorrow I am going to spend the morning at Brathay trying to cheer up poor Mike Doogan. Apparently he is rather bored because he can't do anything.*

*This evening I am going to celebrate my exam results by going to see a film which I have wanted to see for a very long time "King Creole" - with that "hep" "Cat" Elvis Presley. We have the record at school and it is really quite "cool" (I will give you an explanation of any of these words which you don't when you come back.) Also I believe that the audiences in these rock'n roll films are equally worth watching.*

*I am continuing after seeing the film! I was surprised not to find the cinema particularly full. The actual film was mainly a series of interludes of Elvis singing some rock n' roll number with a rather imbecile grin on his face and jerking backwards and forwards in a most odd fashion; alternatively one would come to the type of scene where Elvis was surrounded by a gang of thugs and was beating them all up. Despite this however I enjoyed the film very much indeed - especially the music. Although I felt it to be most non-u' I could not restrain my feet from tapping! The Ambleside audience were most lethargic however, not even one little scream or sob did I hear!*

*I am glad to hear that the book is still going strong - by the way would you tell me some details about it - at the moment I am even hazy about its subject. If I could help in any way - such as correcting spelling mistakes (although my spelling as you know is pretty shocking!) I would love to.*

*I am glad also to learn that your (Mummy's) painting is progressing well. Would it be cheaper if I bought paints back here and sent them out to you? If so which colours would you like me to get you and what size? I do hope Daddy, you are not working yourself too hard, we have a lot of trout to catch next summer!*

*I am relieved to hear that the Chinese stuff is not a serious menace to you. I had visions of you sitting in a Chinese concentration camp!*

*I hope by now that my 7 (or was it 8?) Post Card's have reached you. Every letter I get says "no news from Alan I hope he is safe." Ian took quite a few photos, I will send any good ones on to you. At last I am about to start an account of our journey. do you think you could keep it, because I might want to see it again one day - well we are off!*

*P.S. I am writing the next bit perch-fishing in Windermere. every time I get a bite I will put a [ladder sign - put in the text as \$]*

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<sup>29</sup> The first half contains matter to do with School Exams and has been put in the volume on *Sedbergh Schooldays*



My mother wrote on 12th Sep 1959 from Cherideo

*My dear Alan,*

*Hearty congrats on your exam results, a distinction for English was wonderful, we are telling everyone we meet about it. You deserved it after all your hard work, and we are frightfully pleased. Granny said in her letter "Alan has three passes, History, English and General" which as far as I can make out was all you took, or was "History with Foreign Texts" a separate subject? In which case do you have to take it again? I do hope not, as there's nothing so dreary as going back over the same ground again.*

*We haven't heard from you about it yet, I think the recent riots in Calcutta have disrupted the mail somewhat, hope too many letters weren't used to set fire to state buses. We were most relieved to hear you got back from your trip safely, and are longing to hear at more leisure which of the countries you liked best. Alas, only three of your postcards have so far reached us, the wretches in the post office have probably stuck them up on their walls, maddening.*

*Did you find yourselves speaking fluent French by the time you'd finished, and how were your feet? I hope you had some fine weather when your friend was staying with you and were able to explore the countryside a bit, also hope you passed your motorbike test. I hear David has gone one better and got a car, I must say I'd much rather you had one, perhaps if my book gets published! ...*

## 1960



Alan preparing to fish

All the letters in the first section of this year were written by Iris to Mac. They have been included at length since they give a strong picture of their relationship at this time, and the worries about money and our futures which filled their minds.

### Iris to Mac, 1 Jan, 1960 Field Head

*My darling,*

*So glad to get your letter and hear all is well - except with Tessa. Poor Sweet, please give her the liver injections, and if that fails a shot of Babesan. I didn't think she'd pine that much and I feel it must be something else. All is well here, except a shock from the bank this morning, saying I'm £67 overdrawn and I must send some more quickly! I can't understand this as I thought you had sent £110 early in the month and another £30 later. I've issued cheques of £84-16-0 (including £40 to Mummy) so even with the previous overdraft I should have been covered. Could you please cable some money quickly darling and I'll try and pacify them for another week or so. Terribly sorry about this but I'm trying to be economical but Christmas has been the blot, and Alan's suit and F's party dress. I've been feeling quite ill all day worrying about this as I was quite sure I was within my limits. I'll ask the Bank to let me know when you send money in future, once this ruddy party is over I hope not to have to spend anything more, but there'll be 2 months' rent, oh dear, I do hope*

Someone is going to talk to Remnant.<sup>130]</sup> Our "do" is on the 6th so think of us! Everybody is busily writing lists of what they want to eat, shrimp patties, mushroom flans etc! They'll be luck! It's all a bit of a nightmare for me, but I try not to damp their enthusiasm and I suppose we shall scramble through somehow. Trying to entertain all those people and not spend anything is my chief problem. Anyway darling we're all well, and enjoying life, though the Telly has just packed up (temporarily I trust!). Anne is the only one who really minds! We went up to see ours and Richard's coloured slides the other evening and ours looked much better through his projector, and I saw the ones of the Manas and Kaziranga, some of which were very good. They all 3 went to a dance at Angela's parents but found it a bit dull and all got their feet well trodden on, Annie has to be driven out of the house with a horsewhip but quite enjoyed it. Darling this isn't a proper letter, just an S.O.S. so will write again soon, do hope the flap over Remnant isn't too exhausting and that Tessa is better. Love you lots.  
Totty

Iris to Mac, 5 January, 1960 Field Head

My darling,

Just a short hectic letter to let you know we're all well and still sane. Our preparations haven't quite reached fever pitch, that'll come to-morrow and I have a tiny bottle of brandy by me to meet all the ghastly crises that are bound to arise. It's very complicated as we have to carry all our stuffed eggs and cellotape up to the Knappetts and Mummy keeps sending down messages for the long lace tablecloth in the bottom trunk in the shed! We're having sausage rolls, mushroom patties, sausage rolls, chippolata sausages, cheese straws, salmon mould and sardine rolls plus various jellies and my plaster of paris meringues. We've made it all except the sausage rolls which I've ordered, they only real complications are Mummy with all her bright and impractical ideas, Mrs K's cats which take fright and disappear every time strangers appear, and Fiona who is so terrified we shall shame her in front of her friends that Mummy and I think we shall have to crawl about on our hands and knees with periscopes! The three of them have just had a frightful row, and Fiona stamped out without any lunch saying everyone always picks on her!! I think they've had too many excitements and late nights, 4 dances running till yesterday when I shovelled them into bed at 10. Fiona always meets some gorgeous man and goes about in a dream and we all tease her - poor darling, luckily she doesn't brood and always comes up smiling. On Saturday they went over to Piggy's, Fiona in a bus, Alan hiccougging off into the night on his motorbike. I hated the idea of him making such a long journey at night and actually he had an eventful journey getting lost in the Duddon Valley and his lights failing on steep hills - glad I didn't know. We've absolutely lost count of whose coming to the dance and can't imagine where they'll park their cars, never mind I'll write and tell you all about it, we shall have some laughs I don't doubt. I shall be thinking of you and your party, do hope somebody has talked to Remnant about our financial plight. All the tea firms (Brooke Bond etc) are booming, it seems a bit hard that we should get poorer and poorer. Will write sensibly on Thursday darling.  
Love you lots and lots. Totty.

Iris to Mac, Saturday 9 Jan, 1960 Field Head

Darling heart,

A letter at last, I was getting worried as I hadn't heard for nearly 2 weeks. I'm sorry you're so depressed darling, try to hang on, it's only 8 weeks now and it'll go very quickly. I hardly have time to think or feel anything, except tired but I wish so often you were here - and not only to do with the washing up! The children are very good company, but they think and talk of nothing but their teen-age friends and what they all said to each other and sometimes I wouldn't mind some other conversation! I'm also finding all this driving about at night very hard on the nerves, there are horrid frosty patches these days and last night they were roaring backwards and forward to the Tarns, Fiona just can't get enough company and I hate to be a spoilsport and every time I come out with the "you're too young" line I get told that all the other girls do it, which is quite true - but! Anyway they're going back to school on 15th and then we shall all have some nice early nights. Fiona took out her books for the first time to-day and finds she has 20 chapters of Caesar, 2 Biology books and a dozen French verbs to learn in the next few days. She's in such a whirl about her boys that she can't settle down to work, but I've told her if she doesn't get a grant she'll have to go to work in the local cafe - poor darling. She

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<sup>30</sup> Chairman of the Assam Tea Company

*finds the rest of us so stodgy and down-to-earth. Let's hope she lands one of her rich boy-friends, it'll be the best solution.*

*About the money darling, I think the muddle started because nobody told me £50 had been transferred to Martins. I understood I was allowed to cash up to £50 on my Grindlays Account, and haven't touched that 50 yet. I couldn't understand how, when I'd only cashed £84 I should be £67 overdrawn, which meant you'd only sent 40 odd pounds last month. Anyway I'll now be able to pay the 2 months rent I owe and other oddments and then will juggle my bills. I really am going to try and get a job, and if you get the sack there are lots of jobs in the Westmorland Gazette and I heard the driver of the Hawkshead bus saying how short they were! But hang on if you can till you come on leave, you can judge better what if anything the company is going to do about us.*

*This is the next evening, it's awfully difficult to concentrate against the Telly, we had 3 bouts of wrestling yesterday and then a thriller which was fatal. An I.T.V. aerial has now joined the other 2! It's been freezing for several nights and all to-day so we hope for some skating before they go back. To-morrow we've got to start off in the dark dawn (8 a.m) to Kendal to the dentist and Alan is having another driving test - he failed his first for being too cautious! He is looking so much better than he did when he got back from school, and is rather dreading this term with more exams and interviews, I suppose it's all worth it.*

*We're sitting by a roaring fire, on a Sunday evening, eating Daphne Meredith's chocolates - which reminds me - could you send me Daphne's address and Peter Sehmer's - as we can't write thank you letters? Also those facts about tea-bushes for my book? Don't forget darling.*

*I must finish this or I never will, supper time and we must have an early night if possible, usually don't hit the pillow till midnight. I'm using Daddy's electric blanket and its heaven, we must have one in our own double-bed when you retire, the only snag is I don't always remember to turn it on. Will do that now and then try and find inspiration for a meal. So glad Tessa is better, I've been worrying about her. My regards to the Hon. Peter*

*Take care of yourself sweet and write often. I love you lots, Totty*

### **Grandfather's diary**

14 Jan: Snow, Looked over Borwick Lodge Cottage which Manzi Fe's offer us  
Manzi Fe writes that we can have cottage from 21 March till 10 October at 4 and a half gns a week

15 Jan: Alan goes back to school

Iris to Mac, 16 Jan, 1960 Field Head

*My darling - You would love to be in my position - sitting by the fire with the England-Wales Rigger starting on the Telly. I wish you were here, it seems so unfair that we should have all this lovely sport and you nothing. I never got any further, the match was too exciting, and M and D came down for it. It was wonderful Rigger, the English fly-half Sharp was the star - rather like John Sharp actually. Now the Barrs are installed in front of the Lone Ranger and I'm up in my bedroom in front of the electric fire - the farm-yard smell from 3 Barrs in a warm room is too overpowering even for me! I was supposed to be going in to see Miss Wharton to-day but had a slight headache and made that an excuse - didn't want to miss the Rigger or stand about in bus queues. It's been jolly cold for the last few days, but not as bad here as most of the country, only one snowfall and none of the roads impassable. Alan went off yesterday by bus, the girls had gone in the morning and the house felt horribly bleak - but only for an hour or two thank goodness. I was pretty tired (the children keep urging me to take Horlicks, Lucosade etc as I'm always complaining of feeling tired!) getting Alan off clean with cakes, guitars and darned socks was quite an effort, but it was wonderful just to have to find one clean blouse each for the others. Fiona has been working spasmodically for the last few days, but I'm a bit horrified by how little she seems to know.*

*I went down to see old Mr Haslam about her Latin and he said he didn't think she had a hope of passing - it was like trying to teach a butterfly to build a honey comb he said! He made me drink repulsive coffee out of a filthy thermos in a room that was quite uniquely and indescribably dirty - he was sitting in a hat, gloves and*

macintosh in the kitchen with a couple of hissing cats on his knees - really very pathetic but he just won't be helped. Mentally he is incredibly spry (he's 84 apparently) as he remembers all his Latin. Alan has been helping David Manzi Fe to whitewash a barn and came back with 30/- and a lovely sweater - so it was a most profitable undertaking. David is off to Switzerland for a couple of months to learn languages before being handed a job with the Kendal Provincial Insurance Co! Our day in Kendal at the dentist wasn't too bad. Anne had 3 fillings, Fiona 2 and Alan 1. I'm to get another pair of snappers free, so that's something. Alan failed his driving test again! he put out his hand to turn left, but didn't look round - with all his clothes, goggles etc. on, he practically can't - anyway he isn't worried. He never goes more than 20 miles an hour, must be the safest motor-cyclist on the roads.... I enclose his report and snap taken on his tour last summer. I'll send the girls reports in my next. Have you got their bills? I tracked down that £50 to Martins, nobody had told me about it! It will go in paying rent etc. and I'll manage with the £70 will pay the girls bills out of it. I do hope somebody spoke to Remnant about our finances, everybody here is rolling in money, everybody. Actually I find England smug and grasping, makes me a bit sick thinking about all those poor wretches without jobs in Assam, here it's quite repulsive to see greasy little couples on the "Telly" going off with enormous cars and washing machines for answering questions a child of ten would know. Money and teenagers seem to be all that count here, and there's plenty of both about, perhaps it's because I'm poor and middle-aged that I find it a bit depressing - but I don't think so!

I'm sorry Charles couldn't take Dinah, I hope she'll be all right with Steve. I shall never forget the awful condition Mopsy was in when she came to us - but Kathleen will keep an eye on her too I expect. Glad the veg are doing well - what about the sweet peas? I wonder what the cook turned out for Remnants visit?! Really the L.E's are incredible. I wonder what they'd say if everyone wrote back and said no, sorry, they couldn't. The facts I want about tea bushes are: how much a bush yields a year, how many lbs made from it, average life of a bush, average price of a lb of tea, how much a bush earns in its lifetime?!

Darling I feel ill every morning too, so lonely at the thought of another day without you, but it will pass and then we'll be together always. So try not to get too gloomy and worried please - I feel the bad period is coming to an end. I love you lots - write to the girls soon. Always, Totty

Iris to Mac, Sunday 24 January, 1960 Field Head

*Please write to the girls*

*My darling,*

Thank you for a letter of a few days ago in which you were just off to the Moran spree - I hope you got the polo sorted out and T. Darby, out particularly. I suppose he's been dogging Remnants every step - along with Moll! I find it hard to think any of them exist actually. I hope you've had some rain, the compound must be terribly brown and horrid.

Here we've had floods. A sudden thaw and a day's rain and the road between here and Ambleside was under water in several places. I went in on the 4 o'clock bus to see Sport [the nickname of a teacher], and on the 5.30 bus back we got stuck in the middle of a torrent with the water splashing up to the windows. The bus driver was full of fun and told us to get out our bikinis but we managed to get going again only it wasn't very nice as the brakes weren't working properly and I was sure we were going to slide backwards downhill. Robert and Angela came over yesterday and the road was quite dry again. They spent the day which I found a bit exhausting as we were making marmalade as well, and the Aga and I were just about played out! Still we had quite a good lunch and played Mah Jong and luckily its very warm again now. I had 2 blissful days of trays in front of the drawing room fire, before M & D returned, now we have long long lunches that last till nearly 3 and then it's almost time to start the girls tea! ... My interview with Sport about the girls didn't get us far really. Fiona has ability she says, but doesn't bother to work may or may not pass her GCE depending on whether she bothers herself or not. Fiona takes a delightfully carefree attitude to it all, and I don't quite know what to do about her, short of incessant nagging! She is so erratic and up in the clouds that nothing I say really penetrated - hate to damp her enthusiasm poor darling but -! Alan rang up a couple of days ago for his birth certificate for some entrance exam he's supposed to be taking, he's also trying for a scholarship to Cambridge so is up to his eyes in work. I'm glad we're home this year to see them through all this, it's going to be a bit worrying but they should all have their futures vaguely settled by the time we go back.

*This is the next morning and the girls have just departed for school. All goes smoothly until 5 minutes before the bus, and then Fiona disappears into her bedroom to look at herself from every angle in every mirror and there's finally a thundering of steps down the stairs and much shouting and door slamming before they finally get off. We've had a week-end without the Telly, it packed up on Thursday and Daddy wandered about ringing his hands and saying "Of course it's the Tube - we'll never afford another" - but luckily it wasn't and we hope to have it back to-day. Anne is completely lost without it, and it'll be a very good thing for her to get away from it Completely. Darling I will come to London to meet you if you really want, but it seems rather an expense, and all of them will be home by then. M & D leave on March 21st so I shall have time to clean up a bit and fill all available dustbins before you arrive. It doesn't look much as if I shall get a job, the only things I see are at Kendal. Anyway I'm trying to spend as little as I possibly can, the £70 hasn't arrived yet but I expect it will soon. Shall have to ask if I can pay Alan's bill in installments. I still owe M. about £12. We'll muddle through as long as Lahoty [an Indian who had made a loan] is prepared to hang on - but it is irritating that everyone else (including tea firms) should be prospering while we slowly sink. Anyway darling I love you and I know we shall get through this bad patch very soon I'm sure. Such a lovely morning, wish I could take a sketching block out on to the hills but ! Longing to see your picture please bring it home. All love my sweet, Always - Totty*

Iris to Mac, 1st Feb, 1960, Field Head

*[At top] Are you getting the papers?]*

*My darling – Half-past eight of a grey morning the girls departed for school, and a little space before I start the chores. We've hardly stepped out of doors this week-end as it's been snowing and raining alternately, the snow has all gone now. I had Anne in bed with a cold most of last week, she wasn't ill but very heavenly so spent the mornings in bed and came down for the Telly at tea time. Touch wood the rest of us haven't succumbed as yet though Fiona's had toothache which is annoying so soon after her visit to the dentist. Yesterday I asked Mr Buckmaster and Martin over for lunch, as Mrs is away, as usual the meal seemed to last most of the day by the time it was got ready and cleared away! We all sat glued to the Telly all afternoon and I had a splitting headache by the time it came to tackling the girls' homework which they always leave to the 11th hour. Fiona is working quite hard now so perhaps will scrape through after all. We are supposed to be going over to Sedbergh to take Alan out next week-end, I got a panic-stricken letter from him telling me to keep control of Fiona and not let her into Lupton for more than 3 minutes! Martin is supposed to be driving us but it'll depend on the weather. Alan has had 'flu. The £70 has arrived, thank you darling. I'll pay one of the girls bills and other odd bills like coal and groceries and finish paying off Mummy. She is going away for a week this month to stay with Billy and Julia. I was going up to Edinburgh but doubt if I shall make it now. Come home early in April won't you, don't get mixed up with Easter which is about 10th I think. Is your passage fixed yet? Was there anything about intermediary passages in the new terms? Don't forget Peter's address darling - I hope you're not too involved in this Polo business, glad you ousted Tom and hope your team justifies itself. How are the new ponies shaping? Will write again in a couple of days love to doggies and lots and lots to you, my darling always Totty*

Iris to Mac, 3rd Feb, 1960 Field Head

*My sweet, My quiet time after breakfast so I'll send you another few lines. It's very cosy in my room by the electric fire with wind and rain battering at the window, ghastly weather for the last couple of days and we shall have floods again I think. Yesterday morning I had to go into Ambleside in it, to do some shopping, my umbrella was practically wrenched out of my arms and I was sodden and exhausted by the time I finally tottered home. Today I haven't got to go anywhere thank goodness. Fiona brought a friend home for the night, a pretty little thing (Mike Doogan's girlfriend!) but F. is so excited and silly when she is with other girls (and cheeky!) that she's hardly recognisable. I don't wonder her mistresses complain if that's how she behaves at school. Martin has just driven the three of them to school which saved them getting soaked. He's supposed to be taking us to Sedbergh on Saturday, I'm afraid it's going to be an expensive outing as Fiona is bringing a friend out and Alan 2 so there'll be 7 of us to go to a cinema and feed. Still Alan does owe several boys outings so it can't be helped. Sedbergh is stricken with 'flu so I hope they don't bring their germs with them. I've given up the*

idea of getting a job now, sorry darling - but it's rather hopeless with Mummy going away for 10 days this month and there doesn't seem to be anything close at hand here. I got a letter from the bank saying £70 had arrived. Can't quite make it out as came on Jan 30th but you've already sent your quote for Jan. Anyway they're send me a statement sometime I suppose. Do hope you're feeling less depressed now darling, I get terrible fits of it too, specially in the evenings when I'm tired and cold (M. pulls her chair right up in front of the fire and the rest of us freeze. I usually come up here!) But it really isn't long now, and then we shall have 6 months of freedom from T.R.D's and L-E's [initials of Assam tea managers] and the rest. Anyway we needn't worry about getting the sack if that's what they do for you. I suggest you sell the factory in tidy lots and when L-E tumbles to it that it isn't there we can be sacked and get a nice pension and no worries. I suppose dear Houlden wangled it. Let me know what day you are arriving, Fiona says you won't look at me when you see her in her straight skirt probably true but I hope not as I need lots of love and encouragement, middle aged and oniony as I am. All my love and long kisses - Totty.

### Iris to Mac, Wednesday 10th Feb, 1960 Field Head

My own darling,

Letters pouring in for us all - thank you darling. So sorry to hear about your cold. I can imagine what the dust must be like, do hope you get some rain soon. Thank you also for the £100 I had 2 letters from the bank, one on 13th and one on 30th saying they had received £70 but I knew there must be a mistake, I will spend this £100 on paying half Alan's bill and 1 of the girls, and if you can get another £100 home early next month I'll pay the rest off. I have £30 left of the £70 but bills of £26 still to be paid. My head is in a whirl of trying to make ends meet, it just isn't possible and even the thought of your leave is being spoilt by worries as we shall have to find another £200 as soon as you arrive for next term! I didn't realise you were coming as late as April 10th darling, the children break up on March 29th. Fiona had a lift down to London on 1st and was planning to stay a few days with friends and then meet you, still I suppose it's too late to alter things now. I'll fix the hotel, and do your driving license when I get it. You might tell Houlden that I couldn't afford the fare down to meet you - not that he cares! I knew Peter Remnant would come and go without anything happening - oh dear this is a miserable letter. Yes, book both girls back by boat with me, I shall definitely bring Anne not sure about Fiona but anyway we can cancel it later. Don't take any notice of my moans, we'll struggle through, we can always get the sack (you might tell Houlden that too - that our best bet is to get the sack for bad management as Cappie!). The big news here is Angela's daughter, born yesterday morning, and supposedly like Robert! They're both well and Mummy has gone off to see them to-day though it's snowing. We had a good day on Saturday seeing Alan and his friends will write again to-morrow and tell you all about it. Fiona has a cold but touch wood I'm still free. Both Alan's study mates, Ian Campbell and Geoffrey Bromley have pneumonia! He sits his scholarship (to Cambridge) exam next week but says he's had no time at all to revise. Tell me more about the compound darling, which flowers are nice? How are the cats? do keep an eye open for a pony for Annie when we go back (if we do?!) Hope this moan doesn't depress you, don't let it. I just get gloomy, hopeless spells but they don't last. It'll be better when we're together, and that isn't very long now, we've got more than half way. Take care of your sniffles and keep loving me as I do you - always. Will write to-morrow. Totty

### Iris to Mac, 12th Feb, 1960 Field Head

Expect a delay in letters if the rail strike comes off.

My darling - Afraid my letter of yesterday was a bit peevish - one of those moods when there seems no opening anywhere. I feel much better to-day for no particular reason, except perhaps that it's a lovely sunny day. Flurries of snow now and then but in between like spring, I have a white narcissus out in a bowl on the windowsill and behind it the yew tree is tossing gently and behind that the lake is glittering. All combine to make me feel life is worth living after all, and to hell with money, if we haven't got it we haven't but we can make the most of what we have got - and that's plenty (I sound like the Sherriff on one of Anne's westerns!). Anyway I'll tell you about last Saturday - we left her about 11.30 with Martin and picked up Lois (F's friend) and some buns in Ambleside. It was a gorgeous day, frosty but bright and we had a picnic lunch

overlooking Kendal on the Sedbergh road. Fiona insisted on putting the car roof down so we arrived in Sedbergh purple with cold with our hair in our mouths. We picked up Alan and 2 friends (the same 2 that came to the dance) so that made 7 of us, 2 girls and 2 boys at the back, Alan and Martin and I in front. We headed back to Kendal and saw "The Student Prince" the only film on, it was pretty feeble but they ate lots of fruit gums and then we had tea and fish and chips at a rather gloomy hotel. As we were the only people in the dining room we could relax and they polished off everything in sight and then we all went back to Sedbergh and sat in front of the fire in Alan's study listening to records and singing skiffle. Finally made a mad dash back to Fairfield and threw Lois in at the back door as Miss Wharton walked in the front! Alan really has a wonderful time with a lovely big fire in his study and endless little fags skuttling in and out every time he wants a lump of coal put on. He was looking quite well but has pulled a tendon in his foot so is off games. I didn't see Mr Marriot. I'll try and get over by myself a bit later. Alan now plans to go to Canada if he can't get into a University this year, live with Ian's people and earn vast sums of money doing unskilled work for the year he is waiting - and possibly go to a Canadian University if he likes it there. A good idea I think, as he needs some practice in fending for himself and he can keep himself too which will help. M and D are going to the Manzi Fe's at the beginning of March. So I shall have a month on my own here, shall employ it in writing a play for the B.B.C. competition - and cleaning the house. What time is your flight due in? If it's earlyish I might come down by bus because it's horrid not to be met if you've got hours to fill in. Love you darling - kisses. Totty

#### Iris to Mac, 25th Feb, 1960 Field Head

My own darling husband - for 19 years to-day (I hope). This is to say how much I love you and hope to spend at least another 50 years with you - promise? I shall drink a tiny little toast to you in cooking sherry but we'll save the real celebration till you come back. Please don't have morbid thoughts about not giving me anything, you have given me all the important things darling and I now have everything any woman would want. I promise you that's true, and you mustn't listen to my moans about money (I wasn't going to mention that word, bother!) I think we're coming to the end of our difficult period anyway, and we shall soon look back on it and wonder what the fuss was about. As long as we have our love nothing else matters, not even this house, or the job - nothing. And I think we'll have that for always don't you? I feel pretty smug about it! I hadn't heard from you for two weeks (till yesterday) and Fiona kept teasing me that you'd run off with another woman, but I was much more worried that you were ill or depressed or in prison - anyway I got 2 letters and feel on top of the world. I'll send off the form when I get your license. I think you said you'd sent it with the bills but they haven't arrived yet. It would be a good idea to drive straight up from the Air Terminal, or even the Airport? I could send the money there, if you tell me your flight number. That would save you going into London at all. I shouldn't come up the M.1 but don't go by too many back roads. I want you as soon as possible! We've been living like a Greenland expedition over the week-end. It was snowing so hard on Thursday that I sent for the girls from school and they didn't go back till Monday. I don't ever remember such deep snow, we couldn't get out without digging and of course nothing could get here. Electricity and telephone packed up and I was just waiting for Fiona to have an attack of appendicitis! I did bless the Aga as everyone else was cooking on the fire. Mummy got away south on her second attempt, though the taxi stuck in the snow at the bottom of the lane and we didn't think she'd make it. It's been absolutely beautiful, hard packed snow and sunshine, but now it's pouring with rain and I expect we'll have floods!

The poor sheep have been looking absolutely miserable and a lot must have been lost and the birds have been mile long queues at the kitchen window sill. I'll write again to-morrow darling about finance, but don't worry, I'm not flapping any more. I'll just tell you exactly how things are. The bank hasn't sent me a statement this month. Not long now before we can fight it over together - oh how I long for that shoulder of yours - I'm not the sort of woman who can manage alone - but soon you'll be here and I'll cast myself and my troubles into your arms. All my love, Tott

#### Iris to Mac, 9th Mar, Field Head

Have you an A.A. membership no. for a provisional licence?

My darling - No letter since my anniversary one 10 days ago - but I expect it's been held up. The lovely spring



weather has gone and it's bitterly cold again with talk of snow. I hope M & D manage to get away. They're off in the morning. The house is in a gorgeously chaotic state as you can imagine and we're all heaving trunks and cupboards downstairs and piling them in the hall. There's a man making shelves upstairs at the moment, it looked so nice without the cupboard that used to be there, but Mummy couldn't bear the sight of an empty space! I'm persuading her to take as much as possible - including the sofa - so there! I don't know if the Manzi Fe's will relish the arrival of a furniture lorry piled high with worm-holey chairs but still! I've had Fiona in bed for the last couple of days with 'flu, a mild variety that seems to be going around. She's a hopeless patient, like you, can't lie still and never loses her appetite! She went off to school in an arctic east wind this morning so I hope will be all right. Mummy got back on Saturday evening - did I tell you? Billy and Julia are coming up on April 12th or so. I trust we won't be too over-run by my family - you mustn't be hurt if the children are busy in their activities - they hardly noticed my arrival at Christmas they were so busy with themselves! It's only natural I suppose. I do hope you aren't going to have too many rows with F - she's a sweetie, but terribly rude and outspoken to both me and M and D. She says it's because she treats me as a sister but it's all I can do not to throw the rolling pin at her sometimes! Anne and I get on like a house on fire when we're alone, but the moment Fiona appears the shouting starts! Could you book us back on a B.I. boat, taking us to India Holiday diary? Would save a lot of trouble. The bank say they haven't got the £30 you were sending last month, or anything this month. If you didn't send the £30 off, could you please send the full £150 this month darling? I got my book with a bill for £14 for typing - I nearly swooned. I promise that's my last effort! Anyway I'm £30 in the red, with 1 and a half school bills still to pay (and my local bills) so you see it's a bit tricky. As I say, I shan't move out of the house or bath or have any lunch this month but will need something for rent after they go, or a birthday present for Fiona (her birthday on April 1st don't forget!). It seems no time at all till I shall be getting ready for you, lovely thought, apparently I can get a provisional driving licence for a week or so if yours doesn't arrive, but it should. Love you so much my love - Totty



Julia and my uncle Billy

Iris to Mac, 17th Mar, 1960 Field Head

[At top: 'Hawkshead 307' - the telephone number of the house]

*My darling one,*

*Time is really passing now, and it'll be no time at all before you're on your way. I shall definitely come to meet you. I'm coming by night bus and taking Lucy (Robert and Angela's baby) as they're driving down in their rickety car, and aren't happy about her. I'll meet you at the Terminal. If your driving license hasn't arrived we shall have to collect a provisional one - come to think of it we can't on a Sunday. So send me your A.A. membership card and I'll get one here if I can. Thank you for the money darling. We'll manage, the next lot of school bills can wait a bit, the last for the girls. Fiona seems quite happy at the thought of coming back with us but Anne says it's quite spoilt the thought for her - they loath each other! Alan goes down to Oxford to-day to have his interview for Worcester College, I'm really not too hopeful about him getting in but he's certainly trying hard enough. He's been in the san again with tonsillitis (?) so it hasn't been a very good term. Fiona had two days of flu in the middle of her exams, but managed to pass everything except Latin which she failed by 2 marks so I feel fairly confident she'll get through in July. We went up to have lunch with M and D at their new cottage, it's really delightful and the Manzi Fe's have taken a lot of trouble. It's bigger than this if anything with a gorgeous beamed sitting room. As you can imagine the bonfires have been blazing since they left and the bedrooms look quite large, we have one each at the moment. I have a divan bed in mine and Alan's room looks quite different without that awful old carpet. We want to do some painting before you come but don't know if we'll get round to it. I've hired a typewriter for a week to try and type my play but it's going to be a bit of a rush and I've hardly had time to read it through. We went over to Cartmel on Monday to see the baby, very sweet - Angela is just the same. They've taken a flat in Surrey for 3 months. I had the neighbours over for coffee yesterday. Mr and Mrs, son, daughter, friend and child. They have the old granny there too. I don't know how Mrs copes, they're such nice people. Well darling, keep going for another couple of weeks, what you suggest is plenty for the animals. Couldn't the cook do pani-wallah for the Corps or Chowkidar work? I'll write to Lavender. All my love till I see you and give it to you. Totty*

Iris to Mac, Sunday 27th Mar, 1960 Field Head

*My darling,*

*Just to put your mind at rest about your license which arrived yesterday and I bunged it straight off to Kendal so it should be all right. Which is one worry off our minds. Now most of the worries are with you, getting everything settled, especially the animals. Do hope there won't be any hitches darling. I hate this time just before you leave in case anything goes wrong, but try and get on that plane darling, even if it means selling the factory. Once you're here nothing will matter anymore, you and I can live on bread and cheese quite happily can't we, I have been for the past couple of weeks and feel better for it. The bliss of not having to cook a large mid-day meal - I get myself a plate - full of eggs, bacon, tomato and chips and eat with a glass of milk and an orange and some cheese, lovely! I've been typing madly all this week, I've got a typewriter for a week so am doing my play - a useless task really, I've hardly had time to read it through. Still some of the plays you see on Telly are so grisly you never know! At the moment we're looking at an awful play in which people are dangling about in blizzards on mountains, at least I'm trying not to watch. Juno went over next door and half killed one of the little daschunds, I'm really feeling a bit desperate about her, she's completely out of control. Perhaps you'll be able to knock some sense into her. I had a letter from Pat Cowan yesterday saying she and Felicity want to come here for a week from 31-8th it's not really what I want just before you come but I suppose I shall have to say yes. She'll have to amuse herself though. If only the spring would come. It's still so cold, but the sun is out this afternoon so perhaps the end is in sight. Alan went down to Oxford this week for an interview, but I haven't heard how he got on. He'll need a real rest after this term. Darling I can't write properly with this thing on, but I wanted to tell you about the licence. Will write again in a couple of days, soon it'll be my last letter - very soon darling - and then!! All my love till then. Totty.*

Iris to Mac, Monday 28th March, 1960 Field Head

*Darling - My one but last letter, I really can't believe it can you. Life has been going along so slowly and dully and now suddenly everything is going to happen at once. I do hope you will have a good trip, don't bring us any presents please, we would much rather choose something here. Thank you very much for the £15 darling, it made all the difference. the bank is allowing me an overdraft this month and we'll just have to catch up slowly. Alan didn't seem very hopeful about his Oxford interview, it is just a matter of luck I think, but whatever happens I shall give in his 'notice' at the beginning of next term I think, he can always squat at home if necessary. I went to have coffee with Fiona's Head Mistress on Friday. They're all a bit depressed at the thought of the state taking over the school. She is a wild, vague creature but nice and has promised to take me digging at an old roman site, will you come?! Yesterday I went down to have a drink with the Johnsons who live in one of those cottages in Outgate opposite the post office, they have oodles of money (this is their Country Cottage) so we were given cocktails, olives, shrimps, caviar etc - "we" being the Manzi-Fe's, Buckmasters, and Bramwells. I had to walk down and arrive rather puffed in my boots with my hair on end to find them all draped round in exotic frocks - not my sort of world, or yours I think. It has been such lovely weather for the past week, cold but sunny and yesterday Anne and I spent the morning heaving dustbins and lumps of wood and old macintoshes from the central position they were occupying to one not quite so obvious. Also trying to conceal the heap of egg-shelves and dung which Daddy had tastefully raised outside the shed, bless him! Do hope the daffodils will still be out when you come, they're so gorgeous. I'm not sure when Alan is coming back, sometime this week. I wish I didn't have the Cowans to cope with as well. Never mind darling, battered and half-asleep if I am, I shall be there to meet you, at the Air Terminal and don't intend to let you out of my sight for more than the time it takes to go and fill the coal skuttle again! In case this is my last letter - see you in London, with all my misses till then - Totty*

### **Grandfather's diary**

28th Mar: Heard that Alan has got into Worcester College Oxford

29th Mar: Alan returns

### Iris to Mac, 30 Mar, 1960 Field Head<sup>31</sup>

*My darling - So sorry to get your worried letter yesterday about the encroachment trouble. Why do you always get yourself arrested just before you leave darling? Seriously though I'm terribly sorry you've had all this worry on top of everything else, and then [gap - L-E?] being tiresome too, you are quite right to stand up to him, it's what he needs and the Board but nobody else will. I suppose it's just penetrated their thick heads that they're going to lose all the money they've invested in Africa, or rather I suppose it's us who will lose indirectly. Anyway, a bit of news that I hope will cheer you up - Alan has got a place at Worcester College. I'm delighted and I know you will be. I'd begun to feel there was no hope at all. I don't really know why he is going back to school next term, but he seems to be organising everything and I suppose we can't very well whirl him away the minute we want to. He came back yesterday, arrived just after lunch driven by a friend - I'd just washed my hair and it was hanging in dripping strands round my ears. He is looking a bit tired as he always does, but is very cheerful and itching to go off fishing. The girls come back to-day and the Cowans arrive to-morrow, so I shall be well occupied - if only it wasn't for the cooking, which I loathe. I've not arranged anything for F's birthday we want to wait till you arrive. I haven't even got her a present yet. Don't get us anything remember. I went to get this off with Anne, so no more for now, see you on Sunday darling (I hope) and try not to get yourself in a state about it all, though I know it's difficult. So glad the Rosses have got a flat. All my love and mind you get on that plane. Always, Totty*

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<sup>31</sup> Damaged letter

# Interlude between Sedbergh and Oxford

APRIL – SEPTEMBER 1960

My parents were always very short of money, and the thought of saving a term's fees when they learnt at the end of March that I had been accepted to read history at Worcester College, and perhaps a feeling that it would do me more good to have a sort of mini 'gap' work experience summer, meant that they decided to take me out of school.

For many years I regretted (and dreamt about) that I missed the last, lazy, summer with my friends – fishing and cricket and saying good-bye. It seemed like an amputation. Just as the last terms (and especially the summer) at the Dragon were like paradise, so that last term as a School Prefect at Sedbergh would have been the culmination.

There was, however, the large compensation that my mother was already home on leave from India and I could look forward to a summer with my family (my father arrived back on 10 April), something I had not enjoyed for a couple of years.

Much of the summer has passed into a blur. Yet some remaining diaries, letters and writings suddenly bring back a few important themes, each anticipating events at Oxford and later.

## Norway and Holland

I am not sure when we decided that I should go to Norway to find a temporary job, perhaps already with the idea that with any money I earned I would buy a small boat. I had originally intended to go for the whole summer, but ended up away for only just over a month.

I kept a diary at the beginning but soon lost interest in doing so.

### May 5th

After considerable confusion and with mixed feelings of regret and excitement I left home at 7.30 on a wet and dismal Thursday morning. As the train sped across England to Newcastle the weather cleared until it was a pleasant day by the time I reached the Oliver's for lunch [a Sedbergh friend] – exhausted by a long walk with my heavy suitcase. After a pleasant chat where nothing was really fixed they took me down to the dock where I boarded the Bergen company ship the "Leda" (the largest ship on this route in the North Sea). Two tugs nosed us out between the coal and petrol freighters and we cruised out of the smoky Tyne over a calm sea and under heavy cloud. I felt rather off-colour however and went to my eight-birth cabin (only 3 people in it) for a short nap. The excitement had worn off and I was now feeling lonely and rather frightened. But the sun sparkling on the sea when I came up at about 8.30 cheered me up and I was soon deep in conversation with a young Australian – awfully nice – we talked till 11.30.

### May 6th – Friday

A good night. Came up to see the coast of Norway emerging from a thick mist. We arrived at Stavanger at 9.45 and I walked around it till 12.15. It must be a town of about 40,000 – very pleasant with its all-wood houses and smell of fish. No mountains however as yet. The people are very friendly and helpful. We sailed up in a chill wind through the wind[ing] fjords to Bergen. The islands and mainland on each side were very like Scotland – grey stone slabs and heather – although there is a surprising amount of little bright-coloured cabins dotted about on the inhospitable slopes.

We reached Bergen at about 7 p.m. and I made my way almost immediately up the

Funicular railway to the Y. Hostel. Bergen itself is a sprawling town of about 120,000 people. It is surrounded by steep thickly-pined mountains (usually topped by wireless transmitters. One gets an excellent view of the town and fjord with its many windings and islands from the top of the Flybeon (funicular). In the evening I walked 2 minutes from the Y.H. and could see the lights of the town below me – they were wonderful, many of them being reflected in the pools.

#### May 7th – Saturday

Spent the morning unsuccessfully looking for a job – tramping round the streets of Bergen. As it was early-closing I went up onto the hills in the afternoon and had my lunch there. Although the weather was not too good – it drizzled for a short time, it was lovely. Once you have climbed up through the pines round the Y.H for about 10 minutes you begin to get glimpses of some lovely country. Around you it is pine & larch covered with many tarns dotted around – while higher up there are steep rock and heather hills – worn rock like the Lake District. There is still snow in some of the gulleys now and indeed it is lovely walking. There are many paths winding through the hills with benches at convenient beauty spots – usually with magnificent views. There is considerable wild life up here – during my two days I saw about 5 hares (they still have some of their winter white-fur) 2 stoats (or weasels) also partly white. Several mallards – one with a brood of 11 chicks and quite a few birds – also in one lake some fish (about 11-12 inches long) probably not brown trout as they seemed to be swimming in a shoal.

#### May 8th – Sunday

I can see I will never get this diary up to date unless I write less each day therefore. Today, in cloudy and misty weather I climbed the largest neighbouring peak. To get to the top I had to make a one and a half [hour] detour round a lake and then climb a steep hillside. I reckon the climb was about 1,500 ft. On top there was not much view as there was cloud but there seemed to be a ski-lift to the top – I wish I had known about it earlier! There was also a Television mast which is the most distinctive landmark for miles. The climb down was terrible. I seemed to have chosen the most precipitous way down and I had some anxious moments on narrow ledges before I arrived exhausted at the bottom. I spent the evenings at the Y.H. writing letters, reading “Florence Nightingale” (which I find a most depressing book) and chatting with the other Y. Hostellers and the very friendly warden and his wife – attempting at times to learn some Norwegian.

#### May 9th – Monday

A glorious day hence (i) Found a job with the Bergen line (they did not tell me what it was – little did I know!) and ii) Went round taking thousands of photographs (actually I used up the whole of a 30/- colour film – taking about 17 shots). I took these of Bergen – mostly the harbour and the fish market (where one can choose your fish alive from tanks and watch it cut up – revolting but rather intriguing -) and later in the day up in the mountains and up the floybaner.

#### May 10th Tuesday

After spending the morning posting letters, parcels (Gill’s present) and being jabbed, scratched, cut and having my blood sucked out by various doctors etc (i.e. vaccaniations, anti T.B. etc) I was allowed aboard the M.S. “Astrea” at about 4.0 in the afternoon of a hot day – she was to sail the next evening. I came on board with 2 galley boys who could not speak a

word of English, yet they were very helpful and showed me my cabin (decorated with typical sailors picture of women – usually nude) – and with an attempt at culture in the form of a picture of some tulips. Fortunately the other messagutter (“Mess” boy – I found out as I arrived on board that I was mess-boy) could speak a little English so I settled down for the night in my bunk feeling a little less lost and frightened than I might have been. Indeed the Norwegian crew started the first evening to put me at ease – 2 of them came and chatted to me (in English) that evening; and I was also glad to see there was a gramophone in the cabin – among the 7 or 8 records are Danny Boy (Conway Twitty), this was the first song I heard on board the ship and I think I will always associate it with my stuffy, smelly but comforting & homely bunk with its pictures of Gill, map of Holland and bits of poetry on the wall. So I fell asleep.

#### May 11th Wednesday

Later I will put a schedule of times of meals, waking times etc to avoid having to repeat “got up at 6.30 – had breakfast at 8.30 etc”. Anyhow needless to say the day seemed an interminable string of washing up & preparing meals. The worst part was getting things from the kitchen for here the floor was wet & slippery – on all sides there were red-hot ovens and steam pouring forth while about 10 cooks etc rushed around and I tried to fill 4 large pans with hot meat, potatoes etc and then fit them into a carrier (I have never mastered this yet). Of course I kept forgetting things which I ought to have brought, but the 7 unfortunates who I had to feed were very patient and I arrived at last exhausted in my bed at about 10.0. We had left Bergen about 1.0 in the morning and called in at Haugesund at 5.0 and Stavanger at 9.0. So far it was calm.

#### May 12th – Thursday.

I felt awful all day. Today and Friday morning were some of the worst hours of my life up to now because I was a) Sea-sick (Badly) b) Homesick (very bad).

And here the diary ends.

\*

Supplementing the diary are a number of postcards and letters which I sent or received from home.

A postcard, postmarked 9th May from Bergen, to my grandparents at Borwick Lodge Farm Cottage, was probably written on Sunday 8th.

*Dear Granny and Grandpa,*

*I trust that Grandpa is better now and that you are both well and happy – As you can see this is a picture of the Y.H at which I am staying at present. It is in a beautiful spot – high up above Bergen (you come up to it on a Funicular railway) – 2 minutes walk and you have a magnificent view of the fjord. I start seriously looking to work tomorrow. I will write a letter soon. Mummy should have my address “Poste Restante” Bergen. All my love Alan*



The first of the letters received is from my mother on 12<sup>th</sup> May.

At the top there is a note: *Just got your letter; wonderful! If you get sick take AVOMINE – longing to hear about it.*

*My dear Alan,*

*We were delighted to get your 2 p.c's and to find you had actually crossed the North Sea on your VERY OWN! I'm glad you've found a roof for your head, it looks a lovely spot, a pity you can't stay indefinitely. I hope a job materialises soon, a coastal steamer sounds just the thing if it comes off. Nothing of any excitement here, Daddy is re-painting the drawing room and of course doing it beautifully now he's started (I was all for painting round the pictures and only the bits of the bookcases that showed!). This means we have to watch T.V. perched on poongi boxes without feet among the Staffordshire cows, but at least the T.V. is still there which is the main thing. We've had some good football this week (except the cup final) and of course the wedding [the wedding of Princess Margaret and Antony Armstrong-Jones]. Fiona didn't see it at all as she was rushing round with A. Barnes and Co, they ended by breaking the hired car and of course Martin had to be called in to the rescue! Fiona earned 30/- over the week-end which was good going, but is already bored with the project. Next week-end there is some crazy scheme afoot to go and visit Anne Hogg, but F. can't go as she has her French Oral, she has been practising "Je ne comprends pas" as it's apparently all she intends to say! Granpa is improving slowly, sitting up now for an hour and eating well. The weather has been gorgeous and the apple tree is unbelievably beautiful.*

*Am enclosing a couple of letters that have come for you, hope you don't mind.*

*Longing to hear more, and am keeping my fingers crossed that you'll find a job.*

*Much love from us both – Mummy*

There are two other postcards from the trip. Both are dated 14<sup>th</sup> May and both from Rotterdam. The one to my grandparents had a picture of Rotterdam, underlined, with *to tell you that I have reached here* written on it:

*Dear Granny and Grandpa, Hope you are both alright and the weather fine. I am beginning to settle down in*

my job of general washer-upper though I was very sea-sick on my trip here. Will write soon. All my love, Alan

The postcard to my parents had a picture of Rotterdam with *Proof in case you thought I was inventing my job!* written on it.

*Dear Mummy, Daddy and the rest,*

*As you can see I made it to Rotterdam - but only just as I was pretty sea-sick on the way across: it was v. rough! I am working hard but it is probably good for me. I will write from Bergen in 3 days. All my love and look after yourselves! Alan*

Obviously we arrived back on the 17<sup>th</sup>, so it must have been only a couple of days trip. I then wrote a long letter on 17<sup>th</sup> to my family describing the trip etc.

*B.D.S. "Astrea", Bergen, Norway*

*P.S. I apologise for the awful state of the handwriting later on but most of this letter was written when I was flat on my bunk.*

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*I hope you are all very well and have been enjoying yourselves. Has Daddy been having plenty of good walks over the hills, have you tried Coniston Old Man yet - or is the passion wearing off. Anyhow I hope you have been having good weather. It hasn't been too good or bad here. No rain and about 3 sunny days out of seven. But the rest were coldish and cloudy.*

*I am writing this not having received a letter from you yet (I can only collect them on Wednesdays and I didn't get one this morning (Wednesday). Therefore I don't know what your reply to my suggestion of returning on the 25<sup>th</sup> July is. But as I will explain I have drastically altered my plans. You will see overleaf. So here goes.*

*When I eventually arrived on the ship on Tuesday morning I found that I was "messagut" (Norwegian) or Mess boy. My job is to feed 8 men and keep their cabins, the mess and the corridors clean. As you can see from the following diagram [see DIAGRAM] there is quite a way from the galley to the men - and quite a few obstacles and I have to scramble from one to the other with buckets of food and china approximately 25-30 times a day - at the least. I have worked out that I am working about 63 hours a week as I have to get up at 6.30 sharp in the morning and don't get to bed till about 9.30. However I get about two hours off in the afternoon.*

*[DIAGRAM of the ship with various places marked, including "My cabin. Situation beautifully above the engine so that I throb with every stroke of the propeller!!]*

*However though the pay isn't particularly good considering the hours - only about 1/8 an hour - including overtime I think it is probably doing me good. However I don't think I will stay here more than a month for the following reasons.*

*i) I am homesick. About three days after we left Bergen for the first time (the day after I was seasick) I felt more homesick than I have ever done before. It was far worse than school - I suppose because here there is no one I know at all and no one I can even make intelligent conversation to as though all the Norwegians are very friendly and kind people and have been very patient with me their vocabulary is a bit limited - and though I am picking up quite a few odd words such as engine, eggs etc this does not go to make diverting conversation.*

*ii) It does not look as if I will benefit much by staying for an extra month on this boat - except financially.*

*During my 4 days in Bergen and my odd days in Bergen and Rotterdam when I get leave from the ship I have seen as much of Norway as I will see if I stay for another month; for this boat spends most of its time out at sea or at Rotterdam - and I am washing dishes anyhow if any beautiful scenery goes past! Therefore I think I might as well put forward my booking to about May 10<sup>th</sup> [June 10<sup>th</sup>] as by then I will have seen Norway to the limit. When I get home I want to get another job - preferably not washing-up dishes if possible - and also to build a sailing dingy.*

*I propose to pay my keep up till the 25<sup>th</sup> of July when I said I would be coming back originally. I am pretty sure I will be able to get a job (preferably with Sundays off - I work all Sunday here) and I will pay half my wages (up to £6) towards my keep and put the rest towards a boat. If over £6 I will give you £3 a week. I hope to have £25 when I come back (counting the £6-10 you owe me) so I will be able to start the boat perhaps.*



Therefore could you do two things for me i) keep a look out for any jobs – you know in newspapers etc. and write and tell me what sort of thing is going. You needn't try and actually settle a job as I think after my experience of looking around here I will be able to find one, but if you just tell me what sort of thing is going and if possible the wages I would be very grateful. I find that during the 4 hours a day when I am washing plates etc I spend most of my time either singing or planning what I will do when I get back. (One never realises how really wonderful home is – with its little comforts like a room of one's own – a warm fire – books – a garden and of course most important of all your mother and father whose love and sympathy one takes for granted until one finds oneself alone among foreigners! In fact I even miss Martin.)

ii) Could you find out by some means details about "build-it-yourself" sailing dinghies. The more you could tell me the better. Their length, fittings, what tools you need to make them, their human capacity and of course their price? I don't quite know where you will find this out - but I am sure somewhere in Bowness or one of the boat-builders by the ferry must have catalogues. I think it would be wonderful to have even a 2-seater boat and explore Windermere. When we wanted a picnic we could ferry people out to one of the islands - and also use it for fishing etc. Also I think they might be rather good fun to make. But I may have to buy an old "hulk" if sailing-dinghies are too expensive.

One last request before I go on to tell you a bit about my adventures. Could you copy down the speech of either Mowbray or Bolingbroke at the beginning of "Richard II" when he learns he has been banished for 10 years. And his father's speech when the banishment is cut down? At times when I am feeling depressed I want to quote it! I have already decorated my wall with assorted maps of Norway, pictures of Gill and sheets of poetry, quotes from the bible etc. (Replacing the typical pictures which adorn a seaman's cabin!). And this would go well with them also. Also a photo of you and Daddy if poss.

Now for a few details of the things I have been doing. I came on board on Tuesday evening and found that I was sharing a small cabin with the other "mess" boy who fortunately speaks a sprinkling of English and who also has 8 records (I know them all off by heart now) among them "Stuck on you" and "Running Bear". We left Bergen the next day at 12 and spent the day on a lovely journey through the islands to Stavanger (the same way as I came) – where we loaded cargo at 9.0 in the evening. I won't go into the details of my job – which I gradually learnt – but it is not particularly interesting. Mainly washing plates, clearing and laying tables and carrying food. Thursday was awful.

As I mentioned in my P.C. from Rotterdam I felt seasick most of the day and was sick 4 times. The sea got rougher and rougher as the day wore on and I tottered about the deck with piles of plates and then rushed back to lie down on my bunk - the only place where I felt well. On Friday morning we at last reached Rotterdam (where there is a big flower show which I hope to go to) and at 6.0 in the evening I went off with some others of the team to play football. [I have a photo of the team]. We played against another Norwegian ship and it was a most enjoyable game which we won 1-0 and I enjoyed the whole evening.

On Saturday at 5 in the evening we steamed from Rotterdam (the 3rd largest – ie. most ships – seaport in the world! – I never knew before I went there) and arrived back at Bergen on Monday at 5 p.m. after a very calm crossing - thank goodness!

Today – Tuesday – has been the festival of Liberty "constitution Day". Everyone is very happy – processions through the streets and floats, bands etc – all of which I will tell you later. Anyhow I watched it this morning and it was great fun – and then spent the afternoon sun-bathing on the deck. I think I am just beginning to tinge a slight brownish-pink. I will keep trying.

I am hoping to do some sea-fishing soon – I have the tackle.

Please write soon as letters are my chief pleasure in life – I can collect them next Tuesday and Wednesday.

The address is at the top of the letter. All my love to all of you – Juno included.

Looking forward to seeing you. Alan



Alan second from right on back row of the ship team

On 21st May my mother replied to the letter above.

*My dear Alan,*

*Have just got your letter, can't think what happened to my letter to you which I sent off five days before you were due back, perhaps there was a muddle about it in the post office. So sorry to hear you are so homesick, I was afraid you might be. It's extraordinary how much the sights and smells and sounds you know become terribly important the minute they're gone. I feel physically quite ill when I first go back to India - but funnily enough miss India almost as much when I come back here! Of course we'd love to see you whenever you can get a passage, just let us know and we'll come up to Newcastle and meet you. I'm sure you'll be able to get a job, and I'll start looking around, will also enquire about boats. What about selling your motor bike to go towards it? Daddy has been mucking about with it and found quite a few things wrong, nothing bad, but enough to explain why it wouldn't start, lights went off etc! He also thought he'd put the Buckmaster's mower right with fatal results, he took the carburettor to pieces and couldn't get it back properly, finally old Mr B. and he got down on their stomachs and sorted it out through a long morning. Now it works beautifully and the lawn is cut so short you can hardly see any grass at all. We've been having a very quiet time, but it has been the most beautiful Spring I ever remember. The trees and flowers and blossoms quite exquisite, sad you should have missed it but you'll have lots more. Daddy has been re-decorating the drawing room, painted all the walls, doors, etc and the whole place is glistening clean and we mince gingerly round hardly daring to make contact. We've been walking every afternoon and found some lovely spots, each time we think this is perfection and then find something nicer. Haven't actually climbed Old Man yet, but talk a lot about it and think we might tackle it next week. Fiona has spent this week moaning that she wished she was in Bradford - Martin, Simon, and David went over to see Anne Hogg. It was bitterly cold and they didn't do anything very exciting but she was afraid she might be missing something. We have taken your books back, and had a brief word with them, we will go over and take them out when you get back. You say you'll be coming about May 10th, but I think you mean June, you'll miss The Christening (Robert's infant) which is probably just as well. Granpa is picking up slowly, he's sitting up in the drawing room all day now. Winifred Lindop (my godmother) is staying with*

*Granny at present. We had a ghastly lunch party with her at the Armathwaite last Sunday, a fearful ordeal for Daddy as there were 6 females and him. We went to dinner with the Johnsons and met the Browns (MIKE BROWN'S people!) - who we liked very much - a wild burst of gaiety which we haven't repeated. I'll go and look for Richard II to copy out - then take Juno to the post. Keep your chin up, its all Experience and you've certainly saved us a mint of money for which we're very grateful. Longing to see you, we miss you terribly. Much love from us all - Mummy*

The final letter from my mother is undated, but must have been written on about 26th May, as I replied to it on May 31st.

*We were so glad to get your second letter and find you weren't feeling either so seasick or homesick - you'll probably be sorry to leave when it comes to the point! We'll certainly meet you at Newcastle on 9th, if you stay put by the Enquiry Office we'll find you, even if we turn up late. A pity you haven't had any fishing in the "innumerable lakes" but perhaps you'll get a day before you leave. Also a pity you haven't had the wonderful weather we've been having, hardly a cloud and so warm, I'm sitting in a sleeveless cotton shirt indoors at 9 a.m., and the sun has been up for hours. Truly a beautiful spring which I'll remember for years. We had the Rosses for the night yesterday on their way down to London, it was a bit hectic as it was the girls' sports and play so we had to keep dashing backwards and forwards to Ambleside. Anne was the back legs of a horse and neither of them won anything in the sports (except the relay race due to the other team being disqualified!) but we quite enjoyed it all. The Rosses were as usual, except that he has put his knee out and is hobbling round feeling disgruntled. They were very envious of the house, they're being turned out of their flat in August poor dears and don't know where they're going.*

*We still haven't been up the Old Man but yesterday we climbed Helm Crag, the next hill to the Lion and the Lamb near Grasmere. A glorious day, wonderful view, larks singing and Fiona painting a very good oil painting at the bottom - her first effort and really most promising. Altogether a lovely afternoon but the evening not so good as I fed Anne some broken glass with her supper and then got in a panic and rang up the doctor who said he didn't think we need open her up but to let him know if she started coughing blood! Soon after this Granny rang up to say Granpa was running a temperature again. So we went to bed feeling more than a little depressed - however Anne seems all right and Granny hasn't rung up again - we're just going up to see how things are. Granpa was down here to tea on G's birthday and looking much better but he's very worried about himself and consequently not pulling up as fast as he should.*

*I don't think you'll have any difficulty about getting a job there are plenty advertised but I haven't applied as I didn't know when you were coming. Re. the boat, Daddy thinks it would be better to try and get an old hulk and paint it up, but Fiona was over at the Boddingtons and he advised a Do-it-Yourself, and said we could use his barn for making it. I'll look into both more closely next week and you can decide when you come, and we can see how costs compare. Mr B. says you could make a small boat for £20 but Daddy is skeptical - I think a two-seater sailing dingy would be most fun. Anyway we'll have all the "gen" by the time you arrive and I'm sure we can fix something. Don't spend your precious money on presents, we'd much rather you saved it for the boat which we can all enjoy.*

*Must get this off and go in to Granny, I shall be able to fit in one more letter I think.*

*Everyone sends their love - Fiona is adding a line.*

*[Fiona's hand]*

*Hi I hope you are having a wiz time. I am! - although exams are very close now. We are having a party up at David's tonight - usual crowd - only Edward is coming!*

*Write if you have time!!*

*With all my love - Fiona*

The last letter from me is dated May 31st B.D.S. Astrea, Bergen, Norway

*Dear Mummy and Daddy,*

*I was very glad to get your letter this morning - it is one of the things I look forward to most in the week as it brings a breath of the wonderful spring you seem to be having. At sea one can't tell what season it is except that*

it is not quite so rough now as it might be. As I hope to show you the coastline which we pass through with its shelving grey rocks and heather is very like the islands off Scotland (not as I had imagined it – deep fjords between great rocky cliffs and pine forests) hence there is not much vegetation. I bitterly regret missing the lovely weather and think longingly of lounging under the apple tree in the sun (mostly from laziness I expect!). Probably after this wonderful spell it will settle down to rain steadily all summer! Although I think I have turned a delicate brown, the weather has not been wonderful here. Only 1 day's rain I think but about half the days are misty or cloudy – though warmish.

I am glad to hear that you have not been up Coniston Old Man (or perhaps you have by now?) as I want to be there when the feat is achieved! But I must say Helm Crag is not too bad, I don't think that even I, renowned for my hazardous climbs over the hills, have been up it!

Thank you for making enquiries about the boat and am looking forward to doing something about it when we get back. If I get some work in England I should be able to raise my funds to over £30 with which I should be able to get something. I agree that a small sailing dinghy (it will probably have to be 2 seater) would be the most fun, but what I do want is something with which we can mess about, i.e. build it ourselves or do-it-up, as I feel that Martin at least would enjoy making one (and perhaps Daddy too?). I am trying already to think of something to call it – I feel that it should be something from Keats or Wordsworth Lucy – or Hyperion or some such (or perhaps “Little White Dove”?) Anyhow please try and get some details if you can and perhaps think up a poetic name.

I am also sorry that I haven't been able to fish here but quite honestly there hasn't been much time or opportunity. Our only opportunity being in the sea – and this would not do my fly-rod much good. Also my time is pretty busily occupied reading. I brought 2 books with me Flo' Nightingale & the “Odyssey” and have finished the first and nearly the second. Then I bought two John Creasey “Toff” books and “Black Mischief” by Evelyn Waugh (as usual very amusing) in Bergen last trip (Tuesday) and borrowed 5 books from the “Flying Angel” (British Missions to Seamen) club in Rotterdam – 3 thrillers (Josephine Tey, John Dion Carr – “Black Spectacles”, which I strongly recommend and another as well as “Idle Thoughts of an Idle Person” J.K. Jerome and “Brave New World” by A.H [Aldous Huxley]. I hope to have finished these and “Live and Let Die” (I. Fleming) and Ten Little Niggers, both of which I have just bought – by the time I get home. The trouble is that I get so engrossed in them that I am usually very nearly late with the meals etc. But at least you can see that despite the fact that I claim to work 70 hours a week I get some leisure! I have even heard “Top Twenty” last Sundays and the other Menboys wireless (which also was a portable gramophone – unfortunately he has been just paid off.

I do hope Grandpa is fully recovered by the time I arrive back and Anne's inside is no doubt proof against such trivialities as ground glass after eating school food. I must say it gave me rather a shock when you casually mentioned that you had fed Anne with some broken glass in her food. I had only just stopped reading the Dickson Carr which is the story of a triple poisoner.

Am longing to see you on the 9<sup>th</sup> as arranged at Newcastle – will wait there all day if necessary. I feel now however I must give a strict warning – I simply refuse to do any washing or drying-up for at least 2 days after I get home – I don't mind doing the ironing instead, but the sight of a dirty pile of plates (though the piles at home are insignificant to those here) will make me sick by that time!

Please give Fiona and Anne all my love & wish Annie a Very happy birthday from me. On your advice I won't indulge in very expensive presents – so warn the girls. I am almost looking forward to getting back into the social whirl. And am naturally very disappointed (how do you spell that word?) at missing a certain Miss L... who I hear is coming up. Am hoping perhaps to go to a dance in Rotterdam on Friday.

It was very rough last trip – but I was not seasick. Also won football 4-0.  
Longing to see you – do write. All my love to all, Alan

\*

I have a few other memories of the trip. I remember the cabin, with two bunks (I think I was on the top one). The boy I shared it with had various photos on his wall, several of them showed him in intercourse with a girl. I was rather shocked – as I was when, when we docked in Rotterdam, he invited a girl into the cabin and I could hear them making love. She suggested – and perhaps even brought – a friend to keep me company. But I was in my most

serious and upright state and though very frustrated, turned the offer down.

I also remember that we had a gramophone and few records: I seem to remember that a rock or folk version of Danny Boy seemed to be played a lot. I remember only learning a little Norwegian – like ‘Snakke lit Norske’ – I speak a little Norwegian – an exaggeration. I remember the Youth hostel which was high up above Bergen and in beautiful pine forests. [See Postcard, and photograph]

The homesickness was intense – and I only felt the same desperate longing for home again when I went for 15 months to Nepal. To this day, I do not like leaving England for more than a month or two.

\*

After I returned from Norway I worked in a bakery for a month or six weeks, but otherwise spent the time fishing, preparing a small dinghy I had bought, and starting to read in preparation for my University course in history. Small hints of the life which my parents and sisters lived are contained in my mother’s letters to me in Norway. I do not remember a great deal about my first job in England, working in Watson’s café and bakery in Windermere. I can picture the place in my mind’s eye and remember that I helped get the delicious warm bread and cakes out in the morning from the bakery, but my main job was serving in the shop. There were long periods with few customers when I used to read, somewhat to the annoyance of the proprietor. It was a very boring job, as I recall. I must have got there each day by motorbike and suspect that I went across on the Ferry over Windermere.

# **LAKELAND LIFE**

## Walking the dog



Anne, Juno and Alan



Iris with Juno



Mac with Juno

When I wrote about my Dragon years I was reminded of how important animals were for a growing child – the horses that obsessed my sister, the chickens which were an obsession of my grandmother, the small pets we kept. The period at the Lakes saw a change in my relationship with animals. On the one hand certain categories became less important. We no longer kept chickens and ducks, the white mice and hamsters which gave us so much pleasure faded away after the first year at Field Head. We spent less time at point to points and gymkhanas, though there was some of this. While my sisters and especially Anne had a phase of riding holidays, I lost all interest in riding horses and there was no such opportunity at Sedbergh.

Hunting, particularly the annual Drunken Duck fox hunt and other hunts increased in importance and particularly I became obsessed with fishing and the attendant observation of river life. But apart for the time when I visited Assam and through the detailed description of animals in Assam, animals became less important. The age of reading books which bridged the gap between humans and animals, especially *Mowgli*, *The Meeting Pool*, Beatrix Potter (who had lived down the valley from us in Esthwaite Dale), various fairy tales, was past and my reading and education was now about humour. Talking animals, animal adventures, that whole imaginary world was a childish thing – now was the new world of detectives, adventures, pop music, grown-up films.

The only way in which our lives became more animal centred was the acquisition of our first dog, a boxer. Judged by my grandfather's diaries as well as letters from us all, much of our life revolved around Juno. The walks my grandparents took to exercise her took them all over the nearby fells as it did me. There are some graphic accounts of these and especially of the problems of trying to train Juno not to chase sheep. The worries about Juno and her



'heat', attacks on sheep, and my mother's anxiety that she was too much for my ageing grandparents, fill the letters. Attempts were made to settle her elsewhere, but these seem to have failed, as did the one attempt to breed from her.

\*

My parents had always kept dogs in Assam and my grandparents had been surrounded by dogs for many years in India. So it probably seemed absolutely natural and almost inevitable that as soon as they had their own house they would buy a dog. The house at Field Head was bought over the summer of 1955 and before the purchase was even completed my grandfather noted in his diary on 21<sup>st</sup> June 'Mac and Iris came with their latest acquisition a Boxer puppy.' She was still a puppy when on 12<sup>th</sup> September my grandfather mentions 'Mac Iris and children come to tea after inoculating their puppy'.

Boxers were one of the most popular dogs of that period, as evidenced in the book which my sister received as one of her Christmas presents that year, as noted by my grandfather in his diary: 'Fiona got book *The Popular Boxer*.'

It was one thing to have a large dog like the black labrador my father had in Assam where there was a huge garden, acres of tea garden and forest, servants to help look after the animals. To keep a large and strong female dog like Juno in the midst of a sheep-farming district in the Lakes was another matter. The entries in diaries and letters show the worry this single animal generated – but also the pleasure.

We were all enormously fond of Juno and it must be remembered that it was when she was in trouble or causing difficulties that records of her existence tend to be made. The everyday delight of long walks and playing with her in the garden, the way she wound herself into knots of pleasure when one returned home, her enthusiasm and childlike joy are easy to overlook. She slept on a bed, ate alongside us, was absorbed into our activities. It was like having a much younger sibling – intelligent, playful, always ready for a mock battle, loyal, loving and never dull. In this account we see the way in which an animal can be so central to a middle-class English household.

Some aspects of Juno's impact on us are not revealed. My parents and grandparents were hard up, yet there is no mention of the enormous amounts of food which Juno consumed, the vets and kennel bills, the dog licences and other expenses. What is also implicit is the degree to which as growing children we depended so much on having a pet such as this. The one piece of evidence which suggests this directly is in a letter from my sister on 27 November 1955 to my parents. *Juno is a bit mine isn't she? Alan and Anne say not as I have Candy [a dachshund in Assam] I can't have Juno, and I shall really and truly die if I have no animal, so I will have to find an animal if Juno isn't mine.* The fact that she was given the previously mentioned book on the popular boxer suggests that it was agreed that Juno was, indeed, to a certain extent, hers – though we really shared her. Fiona's commitment to the dog is shown later in that she was the only one of us children to record trying to stop her chasing sheep – and Fiona later kept a succession of dogs, clearly enjoying their company.

\*

The main pleasure we received from Juno was taking her for walks. Somehow just going for a walk in itself did not seem entirely justifiable, but taking this energetic dog out over the beautiful fells was usually a delight.

All of us took Juno out, though my grandfather did the bulk of the expeditions, often going out for three or four miles twice a day in all weathers to give her exercise. His diaries are filled with more references to taking Juno out on walks than to any other type of information. Let me just take the first full month after my parents had returned to India, when Juno was just becoming a grown dog, namely November 1955. On the 1<sup>st</sup>, 'Violet goes for long walk with

Juno'; on the 9<sup>th</sup> 'Violet and I took Juno for a walk'; on the 10<sup>th</sup> 'Took Juno for walk to Tarn Hows' [a walk of about four to five miles]; 27<sup>th</sup> 'Went for walk with Anne and Juno to High Hall'.

I remember many walks, particularly across the back fields to 'Juniper Hill' as we called it, overlooking the Drunken Duck tarn, a walk of about two miles, with Juno snuffling and racing around. I also went on longer walks with her, often to Tarn Hows, as on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1956 with my uncle: 'Richard and Alan go to Tarn Hows with Juno'.

On 7<sup>th</sup> April I wrote to my parents

*On the Monday after Fiona's birthday the girls and I took a sandwich lunch up to the tarns but as there were so many people we took it up on top of the hill on the other side of the tarns and there we ate our lunch with a beautiful view of the Tarns on one side and Coniston Old Man on the other, it was really wonderful. Juno is in very fine fettle as you can possibly see in the photos we have been taking her out for at least 3 miles a day...*

A particularly long walk is noted on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1959 in my grandfather's diary when, with a school friend, 'Alan and Geoffrey climb Coniston Old Man and Weatherlam with Juno'. From Field Head this would be a round walk of twenty miles with two quite high peaks.

My sister Fiona was a tremendous walker. She describes one of her mammoth walks, following the traditional New Years hunt which took place every year at the Drunken Duck. In a letter to my parents on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1957, when she was still twelve, she describes how

*Yesterday it was the Drunken Duck hunt. We got up at 8 o'clock and made nose-bags. Then Alan and Anne and I and Juno (of course) and we set off to get to the summit of Black Crag. It was a wetish muggy day and it was awful misty and we didn't get up to the top till quarter to 10. We couldn't see anything so we went down when we arrived down at the bottom we found that the Huntsman had decided to hunt down in the fields till the mist cleared up when we did get to the bottom. The Huntsmen decided to go up!! We met, Richard (Granny Grandpa were down by the 'Duck!'). As we had just come down neither Alan or Anne wanted to go up so they de-bunked home while Juno Richard and I rushed up B. Craig after the hounds! Finally we joined up with the Huntsman. And we set off to find the hounds which we had lost by then!! We walked all over B. Crag looking for them and finally set off over the Skeleth-Coniston Rd and over some fells. We went up a steep hill. Sat on the top then we had to go down a precepice!! It was awful speshially with the wuff!! I dislodged a big stone. It hit Richard on the back but didn't hurt him. We finally came back at 2.30 from the Tarns (we walked round to it by the hills).*

Since it gives a strong sense of the kind of walks we both went on, here is another extract from a letter a few days later on 11<sup>th</sup> January from Fiona to my parents.

*I have just come back from my walk. I went to Outgate to post a parcel for Granny then I went on along the main road to Ambleside till I came to those piles of gravel and the AA box. I then went through the fields and through a wood (where Juno put up a cock pheasant there are lots around) I then came to the road which goes to the Duck and I went along there till I got to the Drunken Duck tarn and I then went through the field home.*



As well as ordinary walks, we would go for expeditions specifically to try to catch rabbits or hares, though I know that it was the last thing I wanted Juno to be successful at. Thus on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1956 my grandfather notes ‘Girls and Alan go rabbiting with Juno’, or on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1957 ‘Took Juno hare hunting near Tarns’. The kind of event, and my relief that Juno was unable to catch a rabbit, are shown in my letter of 7<sup>th</sup> April 1956, referring to a rabbiting expedition with the sons of the farming family who lived next door.

*... today Granny was told by the Bar's that they were going out in the afternoon rabbiting with their little brown spaniel Judy so Granny said we would be ready to take Juno out at 2 but it was a Sunday dinner and we only started at ten minutes to two so we hadn't much chance of starting then. We set out at last over the fields at the back and we hadn't gone far when Judy started yelping and we found a rabbit in a stone wall but it must have escaped out of the other side as we went round. About 10 yards further on Juno lay down so I thought that she was trying to copy Judy but when we looked in the wall we saw a rabbit crouching with his ears right back, but I'm glad to say that she got away as well, but after the walk Juno was absolutely tired out.*

Another pleasure was to incorporate Juno into our games in the back garden. This was something which my younger sister Anne, who was mad on horses and horse-jumping, was particularly keen on. She did not have a horse of her own, but could pretend that this large brown animal, almost like a young horse, was being trained for jumping competitions. Anne would set up complicated jumping arenas and try to train Juno to perform. The first mention is in a letter from Fiona to my parents in late 1955, referring to the extraordinary collapse of the Queen's horse in the Grand National. *Wasn't it a shame about the Queen's horse Devon Loch... Of course afterwards Anne, Juno and I played lots of horsey games about ESB (winner), Devon Loch...*

There was limited success, as my sister described to my mother in a letter of 10<sup>th</sup> April 1956: *Annie, Alan and I, have put up that course of jumping again and Annie is trying to make Juno jump without much succsex (sp!).* Such events were part of the texture of life which my mother fondly recalled in a set of memoranda she wrote under 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1957: ‘Juno being jumped over the padder net, the girls in their jodhpurs.’ On 20<sup>th</sup> April 1958 my grandfather noted that ‘Anne is trying to make Juno jump’.

These were among the many happy memories, some of which have been caught on a short piece of film of Juno playing with us, along with photographs of walks with Juno. Another memory was the annual show at Hawkshead. Among the contests was one for which we could enter Juno. My sister Fiona gives an amusing account of this occasion in a letter of 7<sup>th</sup> September 1956.

*Hawkshead Show was smashing. We went at about 1030 we walked down Alan went through the fields and Granny and Anne and I and Juno went by road with the hope we would catch a bus but we didn't. There were tons of people there. Juno went a wee bit scatty at all the dogs, cats tortuses Ect. She didn't get anything only the judge gave everyone a shilling who didn't win or anything. So I got a shilling anyway. Juno was quite good only when we had to walk up and down she tried to go and have a chat with the other Boxers. After the showing the dog cat Ect!! we went round and Granny Anne and Alan (and Stanley) went on the grandstands while I took Juno for a walk round. We had a look in the flower show tent where she nearly pulled the tent down!! and ran between everyone's legs. So I took her back we watched the showing of cows ect. Flicka won the half bred Arab filly the funny thing was she was the only entry. Still she did look lovely. All brushed up....In the end Alan Juno and I went home. And fed Juno and tied her to the Arga and we went fishing but we only caught small ones.*



Preparing for the Hawkshead show



Fiona, Juno and Alan at the Hawkshead Show

Alongside this, however, were the difficulties. The greatest of these, which it is strange that my parents did not foresee, was the fact that it was impossible to stop Juno chasing sheep, as well as other animals, though as far as I know she never killed any. But especially in the lambing season this was a serious offence and it says much for the forbearance of neighbouring farmers, and perhaps their respect for a retired Lt. Colonel, that they never demanded that Juno be put down.

The sheep chasing started early in 1956. On 18<sup>th</sup> January my grandfather noted 'Caught Juno chasing sheep', and a week later, less dangerously, 'Juno found sheep caught in thicket. We let it loose.' Then on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 'Juno chased sheep but Stanley came to rescue'. There are a number of other references of a similar kind throughout the diary, though some suggests that it was more playfulness than any desire actually to hurt the sheep. Thus on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1958 I wrote to my parents that Juno *has also got into bad habits again and she has started chasing sheep again. In fact we have just had a telephone call from Mr Warrener saying that he has turned her off his*

*fields as she was playing with his lambs.*

Yet the worry continued and was one of the main reasons why my mother began to try to find somewhere to send her away. So on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1960, some four and a half years after we moved to the house, she wrote

*Juno is really the chief headache as they have let her go back to all her bad habits, and hardly a day goes by without her chasing sheep. This morning Anne and I took her for a walk to the Tarns and she disappeared up a hillside and we finally came back without her - so Fiona dashed off and I thought we'd lost her too. I simply must find a home for her - but who will take her? Anyway I'll see what I can do.*

The one account of a serious attempt to stop Juno's habit is given in a letter from Fiona, written on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1957 and showing that she was indeed trying to take responsibility for the dog which she hoped would be hers.

*Juno is much beter with me at least she has been for about 4 days. Before that Alan and Grandpa both told me how she had been chasing sheep so went with her and tied her up near some sheep I went away and when I came back she was shivering with fright and she didn't even look at the sheep but when she did I smacked her hard with her lead. I hated doing but she had to learn. For about 1 hr followed the sheep with Juno on the lead smacking her. Then I LET HER OFF AND SHE DIDN'T CHASE THEM. Alan wouldn't believe me coz whenever he or anyone else takes her out she does chase them. So now when I take her out she comes the minute I call and she heels and sit imediatly. I don't even put her on the lead on the main road because she heels all the time. But I am still teaching her because I want everyone to have complete control - coz what about school?*

It may have worked with Fiona, but as she noted, what would happen when she went back to school? The outcome is noted in a diary entry less than a month later on 8<sup>th</sup> February: 'Juno attacks sheep when out with Violet'.

It was not only sheep that were a problem. On 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 1956 my grandfather noted 'Juno damages chicken of Mrs Shuttleworth'. On 7<sup>th</sup> January 1957 Fiona wrote to my parents about another incident.

*Alan is in a bate with me. Coz just when he and I arrive back we met Lassie and Bob and Pip and Alan with their ginger kitten. I told Alan to let Juno off to play with Lassie. By mistake I put the kitten down (Tigger its called) and Juno rushed at it. Poor little thing was almost killed. But it managed to run through a fence. Juno rushed round to the gate where that was a whole pile of muck. Alan tore after her and ran right through the muck (he had his wellies on luckily!). But he got mad with me!!! Not that I care!*

On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1960 my mother wrote in despair, shortly before my father returned. *Juno went over next door and half killed one of the little daschunds, I'm really feeling a bit desperate about her, she's completely out of control. Perhaps you'll be able to knock some sense into her.*

The real difficulty was that she was a very big, powerful, and playful dog, which would do what most dogs would do – explore, chase, hunt.

A lesser problem, but one which occurred frequently, was that when Juno went on heat special measures had to be taken and the house could become surrounded by amorous suitors. There are quite frequent references in my grandfather's diaries to this event, for example on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1956 'Juno goes on heat', which seems to have lasted for quite a time for only on 26<sup>th</sup> did he write 'Juno's heat time over'.

It was clearly something that my mother was worried about, realizing the complications it caused. Thus she wrote to my grandparents on 13 October 1958

*So glad Juno is better and hope her heat isn't going to be a nuisance, I should keep her shut up for the three*

*dangerous days and the rest of the time confine her exercise to romps in the back fields and not risk being pulled over on the lead. You can get an injection to give a bitch if there is an accident, which almost ensures there will be no puppies.*

And then three weeks later on 1<sup>st</sup> November, *hope Juno is safely through her heat without too many serenading sheep dogs outside the windows!*

This problem may have been one of the factors which aborted an attempt to send Juno away to a friend in 1959, my mother reporting on 10<sup>th</sup> July *Pam seems quite happy with Juno still, though she has just sent her away over her heat as all the gentlemen of the village were hammering on the back door and scuffing up chunks of her lawn.*

One partial solution which was tried was to mate Juno. Why my parents wanted baby boxers I am not sure, but we may have put pressure on them. So there are several rather coy references to this in letters to me and my grand-parents. On 20<sup>th</sup> April 1958 she wrote to me *I wonder if Juno's marriage has taken place yet?! And two weeks later on 4<sup>th</sup> May to my grandparents, Any matrimonial plans for Juno, or have you decided to leave it?*

Clearly the mating took place but was not successful. There was probably some kind of non-refundable payment for this, which led to some bad feelings, made more complicated by the fact that the owner of the male boxer was one of my schoolmasters at Sedbergh [Mr MacDougall]. This lay behind my mother's comment to my grandmother on 2<sup>nd</sup> July *A pity about Juno in a way, but don't write too rude a letter to Alan's master!*

Apart from these difficulties, as well as quite frequent references to the cut paws, skin diseases and other ailments which caused worry and expense, there was generally the strain it caused on my ageing grandfather who, in my mother's view, was over zealous in taking the dog for long walks – though from memory, I know that Juno now gave him one of his main purposes in life and, on balance, must have been a very positive force in his life.

When my grandfather was left on his own, my grandmother off on one of her trips or in hospital, Juno was sometimes put in kennels. But more radical solutions were also envisaged.

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 1959 my mother wrote from India to my grandparents.

*There will be other odds and ends of expenses by then and Juno. Pam Shaw is quite anxious to have her so I suggest Alan takes her down when he goes to Iwerne. It will mean going to Winchester which is rather out of his way, but better than entrusting her to RSPCA. I feel so sad to think of her in kennels, specially after her life spent under the gold eiderdown, but realise the difficulties. Anyway when the children come back they can bring her home and look after, but I hope Daddy won't drive them out on three hour walks morning and afternoon because it really isn't necessary. When we had charge of her we sometimes didn't take her for a walk for a week on end and she stayed perfectly fit and amenable, with a good smack to put her in her place occasionally.*

Two weeks later she wrote again on 23 March about Pam,

*She is a large strapping creature and has two large strapping sons so if they can't manage Juno nobody can, anyway she says she will be quite honest about it and if Juno is beyond her she will arrange to have her put down... tell Richard not to paint too gloomy a picture of Juno when he hands her over! I'm sure she will be quite manageable with real firmness which Pam will give her, being a fairly managing sort of person.*

A week later on 30<sup>th</sup> she wrote again

*I wrote to Pamela saying Richard would bring Juno on 9th but it seems that isn't now the case, so perhaps you'd arrange it between you, I'm sure there'll be no difficulty in her putting Alan up... I hope Alan won't find her too much of a handful on the train but I think its the best way. It'll be a relief when its all fixed and finished with.*

The diary notes that on 8th April I took Juno down south and on 14<sup>th</sup> April my grandfather notes 'Mrs Shaw writes that Juno is a great success and is having a good time at East Meon.' Then comes the account of the problems of too much attention from neighbouring dogs while Juno was on heat.

Clearly, unless it was just a temporary arrangement, it was not a success, for in my summer plans for August, I noted in a letter to my parents: *Thursday morning - fish and I go down South- Juno is dropped at Kennel* and on 4<sup>th</sup> August my grandfather noted 'Mrs Shaw arrives with Juno'.

My mother then wrote on 10<sup>th</sup> August to my grandparents, suggesting that despite this failure she would be looking for another home.

*I wonder how Juno is, and hope she isn't causing too much friction, it all depends on Daddy really, and whether he will insist on wearing himself out taking her for walks, which she doesn't need. We will pay for her food if you let us know what it is. I hope she will get by until I come home, when I'll made an out and out effort to find her another home.*

Finally on 26th Aug she wrote again that *I'm so glad Juno is settling down at last, do hope you'll continue to be strict with her and not let Daddy tire himself out.*

It is clear that my grandfather, especially, was deeply attached to Juno and my memories of them is that they were inseparable. This was part of the problem - he took his responsibilities to take her for walks too seriously. And when Juno was away he believed she was grieving for him. Thus, in a letter on 30 March 1958 I described how *Juno has come back from the kennels, she looks a trifle thin - Grandpa attributed to her pining at his absence, but Mrs Knappit (who came to dinner last night) said that it was because Juno had had a bit of her foot cut off.*

The fact that Juno slept on a bed with an eiderdown over her, was constantly cuddled by the family, given Christmas presents, and many other small treats shows something about our attitude to her. While the farm dogs next door were treated as working animals – kept outside, often wet and cold, tied in barns – Juno was a typical middle class pet, almost another child. She was always there in the background and just as my days in our Dorset home were suffused with memories of ubiquitous chickens, so my life at Field Head is inseparably bound up with the powerful, loving, rumbustious youngest member of our family – the popular, or to our neighbours not so popular, boxer, Juno.



## Motorbike freedom

In the Dorset account, the question of transport and independence came up in the form of our family's dependence on public transport and, in particular my first bicycle and the joys of cycling. That was a test of character and a source of pride and freedom.

The equivalent for the Lakeland days was the purchase of my first motorbike when I was sixteen. The bus service was intermittent, the countryside too hilly for pleasant bicycling, my older friends were starting to get cars, so my thoughts turned to the idea of buying a small motor bicycle.

The first hint of my interest occurred just after my sixteenth birthday, when I wrote to my parents on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1958 *You were right about my reason for wanting the Exchange and Mart, and by the way David was talking tripe when he said that you were not allowed to ride a motorbike until you were seventeen as several of my friends have got them at the age of 16.*

My mother, who, as always, was enormously encouraging – overcoming her fears for my safety and putting my happiness first, wrote back on 28<sup>th</sup> February with some suggestions and thoughts.

*I think it would be a good idea to try and get a second-hand motor scooter (not a motorbike, far too dangerous) but will you be able to learn to ride it, get a license and all in the holidays? You have the 15 pounds in your savings book and eight left over from your electric trains, Stanley Barr is the bloke to get on to anyway as he knows of one bought for 11 pounds. Daddy says he will teach you to drive a car when you come out, can't believe you're old enough to do any of these dangerous things.*

I wrote on 30<sup>th</sup> March, keeping my options open, *I am still looking for a scooter or a 98 cc motorbike (they are very light and safe) but there now seems to be some doubt whether you are allowed to ride when you are 16. Still Stanley Barr will probably know.*

A week later on 6<sup>th</sup> April I had narrowed down the field, and sought to reassure my mother whom I knew would be worrying about my purchase of a powerful machine, a James 98 c.c. model, offering to finance it with money from the sale of my electric trains.

My sister Fiona captures some of my remembered excitement as I leafed through the catalogues of the sleek little motorbikes then flooding onto the market and re-assured my mother that I was just looking for a very light bike

The visit on the 11<sup>th</sup> is recorded by my grandfather in his diary: 'Go to Kendal with Alan re motor bike - J.Walker Strickland Gate' – I remember the array of bikes, but they were all either the wrong size or too expensive. My mother wondered about the success of this visit, writing on 20<sup>th</sup> April about the practical matter of raising the funds for the purchase.

*I wonder if you managed to get a motor bike, I agree that it would make a vast difference to be able to be free of buses and you really must try and have one for the summer. You have £8 left from your guitar money and we will advance you something on your birthday, if you can't get a second-hand one could you get a new one on the never never? We could pay the installments and you could pay us back at some later date when you have some money. The other alternative is to try and get a job for the first couple of weeks of the holidays...'*

I must have written to say that we had found nothing on that holidays as my mother wrote on 28<sup>th</sup> April *I'm sorry about the motorbike, anyway if Granpa keeps his eyes open you should be able to get one before next hols.* My mother also showed her commitment to a project she was half terrified of in other ways – alerting my godmother Pat, and my aunt Jean in Scotland to keep an eye out for second-hand bikes. On 20<sup>th</sup> May she wrote to me

*I've asked various people, Cowans, Macfarlanes etc. to keep an eye open for second-hand motorbikes, as there's probably more chance of getting one in a town and Uncle Alan may hear of one through a patient. Our Sikh carpenter here has just bought one, he goes hurtling about with his beard flying in the wind and falls off at*

*practically every corner.*

On 5<sup>th</sup> June, while I was at school, my grandfather noted in the diary 'Bought motor bike from Rowlandson for £50 - James 200 "Captain"'. I suspect my energetic grandmother was equally behind this purchase. This was not the small 98 c.c. bike I had been searching for, but quite a serious 197 c.c. James motorbike, which clearly worried my mother further. The bike arrived on 1<sup>st</sup> July, as noted in my grandfather's diary.

Meanwhile my mother had heard about the purchase and wrote on 23<sup>rd</sup> June :

*Thank you for your letter, we heard the news of the motorbike from Granny and Granpa, and I have been in a mild flap ever since as it is a much larger and fiercer machine than I visualised. However if you're careful, and remember to check up on brakes etc. regularly you should be all right. As I told them, this summer you must be content to potter round quiet roads, down to Windermere and Coniston and over to see Stephen - that sort of thing with perhaps a trip to Sedbergh at the end of the hols if you feel confident enough, but please, no dashing about on main roads at week-ends. You really are a bit young for a motorbike and you must promise not to go fast or take it out when the roads are skiddy, or attempt any of these passes Wrynose etc. this summer. Am thinking of you as well as my nerves, because one accident could land you in a bath chair for the rest of your life, and as well as worrying about yourself you've got to think of all the mistakes the other fools on the road may make. So go ahead and enjoy yourself!! I think we had better make the £15 a combined birthday and Xmas do, trust there's no chance of your getting on the first XV this year or we shall be finally ruined?!*

The combination of this gift and some money from the sale of my trains and guitar must have met the cost – perhaps with help from my grandparents.

I heard about the bike at school and was clearly excited by the prospect of my new freedom – but also anxious to reassure my mother. I wrote on 29<sup>th</sup> June

*Now that I have at last got a means of transport I will be able to go down to Windermere in the evenings, which is the best time. Also I will be able to go over to the Duddon where Stephen caught those Sea-Trout. Granny tells me that you are worried about me getting a motorbike and not a scooter. But honestly they are no more dangerous than bicycles, they go faster but they have stronger breaks (owing to greater surface of wheels). But I will promise that I will be very careful, and not go at all fast, though I do not think the bike will go very fast anyhow. It is not a heavy bike. The average size motorbike is about 300 c.c. This one is only 197 c.c.*

I clearly had to purchase the gloves, helmet, warm coat and other items, not to mention L plates, oil and repair kit. For example, I went to Kendal on 7<sup>th</sup> August to buy the crash helmet. Thus kitted out, on 8<sup>th</sup> August, according to my grandfather's diary, 'Alan's first motorcycle run to Tilberthwaite and Little Langdale.'

If there was a rite of passage at adolescence, this was it; the start of independent adulthood was visiting my friend Stephen Grieve at Elterwater on my gleaming new bike. My mother meanwhile was writing to me encouragingly, as on 10<sup>th</sup> August *Am dying to hear about the motor bike, do hope its a success*, while also writing to my grandparents five days earlier *Hope the motorbike isn't causing too many anxious moments!*

My grandfather records in his diary: Sunday 10 Aug: Alan's back tyre punctured. He goes off to Duddon Valley, fishes in thunderstorm and returns with 2 good sea trout. The next day, 11 Aug, 'Alan again bikes to Duddon Valley'.

From then on I started to use the bike to fulfil my great passion for fishing. An account in a letter on 16<sup>th</sup> August of one of my first serious expeditions would have chilled my mother's heart, since I did exactly what she had warned me against – going over one of the steepest passes in England (1:4 gradient) in a thunderstorm. The account is cited in a previous letter.

The bike clearly gave me a thrill, alongside the pleasure of extending my fishing opportunities, though it suffered from intermittent faults.

I was all the time driving under a Learner's licence, but took my test for the first time on 10<sup>th</sup> September, my grandfather noting in his diary on that date 'Alan's motor bike driving

test which he failed'. My mother wrote that the reason for this failure was that I was too cautious, no doubt hardly travelling at more than a few miles an hour. I failed again on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1960, my mother writing to my father that I had failed again.

Over the next two years I remember a number of other expeditions. I remember racing David Manzi-Fe on my motorbike against his scooter down the twisty Esthwaite Valley roads. I remember the strange feeling of wearing a helmet. I remember the pleasure of side panniers where I could put purchases and I must somehow have also tied on my fishing rod. I remember that the bike would frequently stop – or not start – and that the secret was usually to clean the spark plug.

I used the bike for longer expeditions as my confidence grew. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1959 my grandfather's diary notes that 'Alan bikes to fish at Sedbergh', a round journey of over fifty miles and rather strange since I would shortly be returning there for the summer term. The following 7<sup>th</sup> September 1959 I went further afield, going on the bike to see my school friend Ian Campbell in Newcastle on Tyne.

The following year the bike became handy for another purpose – to increase the range of my social life and particularly in relation to parties. On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1960 I mention in my diary: 'Dance - Piggy. Quite good fun - a terrible drive over on my mo-bike.' My mother three days later in a letter to my father, quoted above, fleshed out my 'terrible drive'.

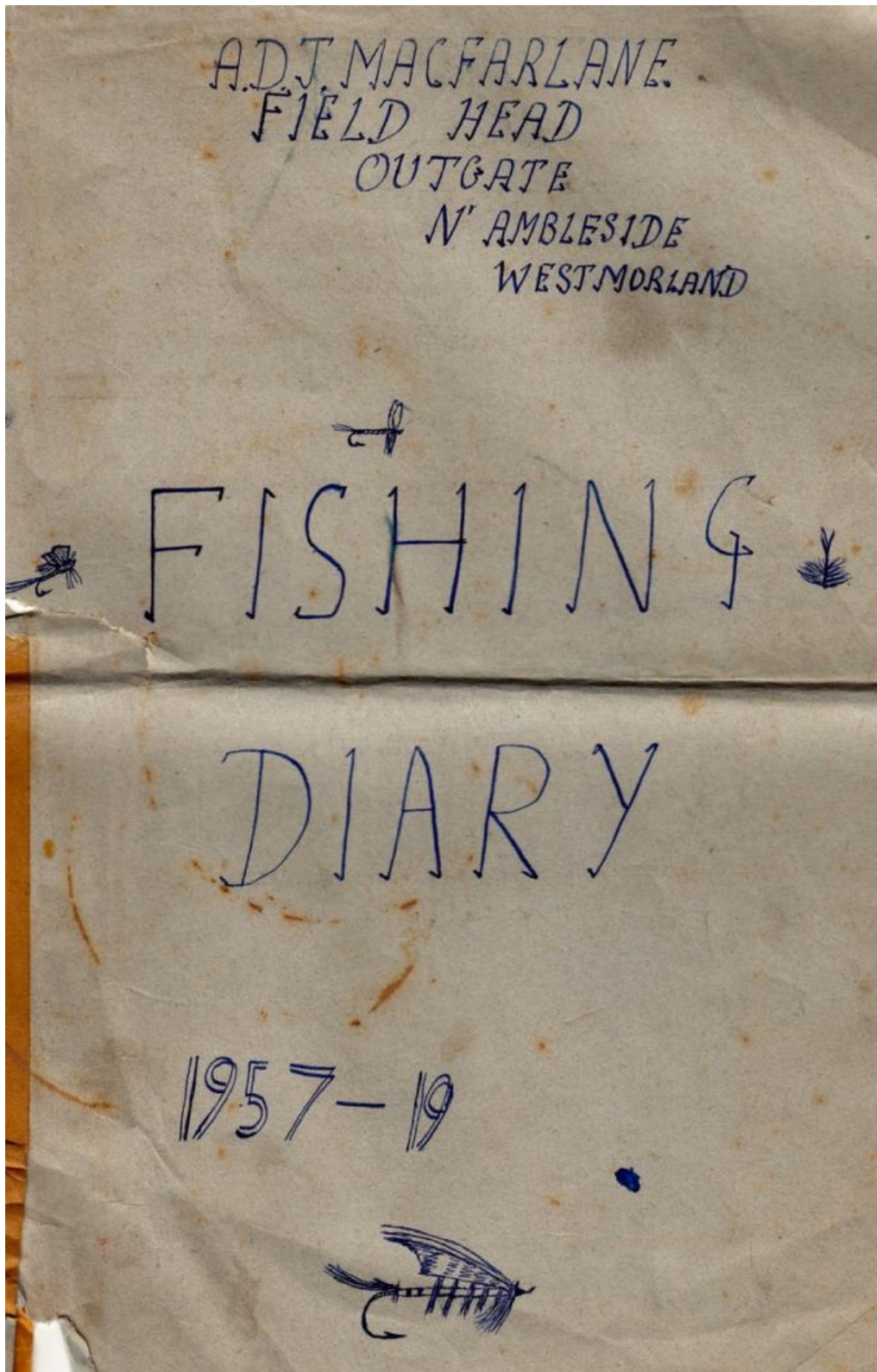
An epic drive occurred when I went down the Lancashire coast in August 1960 to see a girl-friend who lived with her parents in Formby. It must have been fifty or more miles, weaving through the seaside resorts along the old A65. In a short summer diary I kept at the time I mention part of this journey. 'Martin and I decided to go down to Formby where the Listers were having a garden fete in their grounds. After considerable meanderings through Formby and Southport by way of a very pleasant Chinese restaurant, I found myself standing outside the entrance of the "trees" feeling very scared.'

It was a frustrating afternoon, tightly chaperoned by the family, and the journey back was a nightmare. 'What a journey back too. We arrived home - Martin on the back of my bike (the police had stopped Martin because of his lights) at 3.0.' I suppose I must have passed my driving test at last by this time as otherwise I would not have been allowed to take a pillion passenger.

The bike was also essential for my first paid job when, during several months of that summer I would go by bike each day the ten miles or so to Windermere to work in a bakery.

All that sense of freedom and power which is captured in classics such as *Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance* or 'Electra Glide in Blue' was there. Somehow it fitted into that exuberant period when the world opened out, the swinging later 1950's, Elvis, skiffle, coffee bars and the liberation of my late teens all coincided. I was on the edge of an independent existence. There was plenty of 'Zen' in the experience, but my contribution to the art of motorcycle maintenance was limited to changing the spark plug and some minimal lubrication.

## Passion for Fishing



I had started to fish in the canal at Oxford when I first arrived in England. The ‘Confessions of a Schoolboy’ written when I was seventeen, contains the following: ‘We went to live first at Oxford with my grandparents and aunt. The house was too small for us really, but I spent much of my time down fishing in the little canal.’ Here I touch on something which may have lain behind my obsession with fishing – and the thing that seems to explain the fact that canal fishing was once the largest outdoor activity of the British and boomed during the Industrial Revolution.

Both at Oxford, where there were tensions in the household, and throughout my life, fishing was a justified escape. It was a licence to be alone and in control of one’s own thoughts and destiny. It was a calming pursuit, especially canal fishing, and I early discovered that it took me away into my own world. If one said one was just going off, adults would be suspicious. But fishing was a permitted form of escape and much of my childhood revolved from then on round it.

Though I did some fishing in ponds and in the sea and in the river during my years in Dorset, and my first trout fishing had actually been in Scotland with my father’s parents when I was about twelve— where there was a trout stream behind the house and where I caught my first trout at the age of eight, it was really when we moved to the Lake District that I became obsessed with fishing.

From the time when we arrived near Lake Windermere in the winter of 1954, the letters and diaries of my family, bear witness to a tremendous burst of enthusiasm. At first I used a worm and a spinner for coarse fish in Windermere, but when we moved to Hawkshead in the spring of 1955, just before I went to Sedbergh, where there were becks and tarns nearby, I began to fish for trout in earnest.

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I think that fishing must have meant so much because it focuses several things. The escape to loneliness, something akin to what Yeats describes in his poem on ‘An Irish Airman Foresees his Death’ or St Exupéry memorably captures in *Flight to Arras*. A time to think and sort out in a quiet way the pressures of growing up. Then there is clearly the excitement. Everything is still and in waiting, then the sudden tug, splash, flash of gold beneath the water and the battle is on. Then there was the fact that it took me to so many beautiful places. I would never have spent hours at dawn, in the heat of the day, at sunset and even at night in glorious countryside, watching the changing seasons, noting the minutiae of insect and other life, and entranced by swiftly flowing water which soothes the eyes, if I had not fished.

Then there was the praise and esteem of others – a special treat to cook, eat and perhaps share one’s trout in a school where food was short. Then the sociability, the discussions, the stories told, and especially the sharing with my father whom I found it more difficult to relate to as I grew older and more immersed in intellectual things. He was passionate about fishing and later we would go on special fishing holidays to Scotland and fish together in the Hebrides when he retired to a croft there. We could write to each other about it, and plan and exchange notes. Even my mother, for a while, was very enthusiastic, something I learn from her letters.

Finally it was an outlet for my dreams and plans. I would spend the barren winters drawing maps, making flies, repairing rods, and working out stratagems. Then through the summer in numerous different streams, lochs and tarns I would pit myself against the foe. The passion was greatest precisely in these five years before going on to Oxford. It took over from electric trains, airguns, toy soldiers and other hobbies and was what I dreamt about, talked about and became most excited about.

\*

The epicentre of my fishing was a small stream, or beck as they were called in the Lake

District, called Black Beck, which came down from the slopes of Black Crag, and wound through meadows to Esthwaite Water. It was a surprising stream. It seemed, and seems in memory, such a small trickle between stones, especially after dry weather. But it was well covered for most of its length by overhanging trees and the water that oozed from Black Crag must have been rich in nutrients, for over the years I had many adventures with the trout there.

As I recall, the best time was dusk, when I could walk down through a winding lane, and arrive at a stone bridge over the beck a few hundred yards away. I used to lean over the bridge and watch quarter pounder trout rising or sliding in under the bridge. One evening something seemed to have called together all the trout into this one pool – only about twenty feet in length and a couple of feet deep. I approached the pool across the thick grass of the neighbouring field and dropped in a worm. Splash – and a tightening of the line, a fine nine inch trout was on the bank. Usually this would frighten away the other remaining few fish. But it did not do so this evening.

As I gently dropped another worm in, another tug and another fish. This must be the last I thought as I dropped the worm in again (lovely striped worms from the dung heap of our neighbour Mr Barr). Another tug and a moment of taught line racing through the water – and another fish. Amazing, but, as I recall, not the last. I seem to remember that I caught half a dozen trout in that one pool – and several of them worth keeping. The mind alone can fill in the darkening landscape, the buzz of insects, the early dew on the grass.



Black Beck as I rediscovered it over fifty years later

It is almost impossible to recapture the excitements, but a few memorable outings are recorded in letters and in the fishing diary I kept at the time.

## 1956

Fiona to parents 1st August 1956:

*In the afternoon it was slightly drizzling but we went to B[lack]. Beck which hadn't flooded then and did some fishing. Alan caught several fish and Stanly caught one and he was just about to conk it one and slithered down a rock into the water He slithered after it only just got away it was quite big. But not as big as the one Alan caught me for supper he only caught one he could keep out but that one was jolly tasty.*

Alan to parents 7th August 1956:

*I fished in Black Beck the day before it rose and I caught a nice fat quarter pound trout, then a few days later I went to the Brathay where I caught about 12 small trout on wet fly in a fairly large water but I wish I had fished the day before because I heard that the "Locals" had caught 5 good fish, 3 of them over 1 and a half lbs. I suppose these fish were up from the lake.*

Alan to parents 20th August 1956:

*I have not fished for the last three days a bit earlier I caught 24, 12, 19 trout in little becks the first and last in Rydal beck that runs in the bottom of Fairfield basin. But they were all small ones the biggest being about 7 and a half inches but as the ones out of Rydal beck were mostly caught on Dry fly it was quite good fun.*

I noted the main events of the fishing in the Lakes in my diary as follows:

		<u>MEMORABLE OUTINGS</u>		
<u>NAME</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>INCIDENT</u>		<u>PLACE ON WHITE</u>
Black Beck	3 fish - Avge	size $\frac{1}{4}$ lb	caught on worm.	Below 2nd bridge.
Scandale Beck + Tom Gill	3 fish - "	"	"	Round where they meet.
Rydal Beck	1st - 21 fish - "	size $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins	caught on } Greenwells glory, Black gnat, Blue	On the moor above rocky part
	2nd - 19 fish - "	size $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins	"	upright.
Scandale Beck	3 fish - "	weight $\frac{3}{4}$ lb longest $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins	caught on fly (dry).	Between bridge & Rothay
Brathay	14 fish - 4 over 8 ins	"	caught on dry fly: best black gnat.	above New Bridge
	5 fish - 1 - $\frac{3}{4}$ lb; 1 - $\frac{1}{2}$ lb	"	caught on Greenwells glory.	along Larch Burn.

## 1957

I started to keep a detailed analytical diary of my fishing from 1957.

DATE	Height	PLACE	NOS	SIZE	REMARKS
17/3/57	7 1/2	Point on Rowley 5(2) - (10)	3	6 1/2, 7, 6 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley 5(2) - (10)
21/3/57	7 1/2	Point on Rowley - 2(E)	3 [L]	8 1/2, 7 1/2, 7 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley - 2(E)
22/3/57	7	Point " " - 2(1) : 5(2)	3	6, 5 1/2, 5 1/2 ins.	Point " " - 2(1) : 5(2)
24/3/57	6	Point " " 6(1) 5(1) 2(4)	6 [L]	8 1/2, 7 1/2, 6 1/2, 6 1/2, 6, 5 ins.	Point " " 6(1) 5(1) 2(4)
25/3/57	5	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
26/3/57	5	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
27/3/57	4	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
28/3/57	4	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
29/3/57	3	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
30/3/57	3	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
31/3/57	3	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
1/4/57	3	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
2/4/57	3	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)	1 [C]	5, 4, 3 1/2, 4, 3 ins.	Point " " 4 ps below rd. (only)
3/4/57	4 1/2	Point on Rowley + 2 (2) + 3(1) + 4(6) + 10(1)	7 [L]	8 1/2, 7 1/2, 6, 6, 6, 5, 5 ins.	Point on Rowley + 2 (2) + 3(1) + 4(6) + 10(1)
4/4/57	4	Point " " + 3 (4) + 6(2)	6 [L]	9 1/2, 7 1/2, 6 1/2, 6, 6, 6 ins.	Point " " + 3 (4) + 6(2)
5/4/57	4	Point " " also land 3(1) + 4(5) + 5(1)	7 [L]	10 1/2, 8 1/2, 7, 6, 6, 5 1/2, 2 1/2 ins.	Point " " also land 3(1) + 4(5) + 5(1)
6/4/57	4	Point " " just above Newbridge (10)	10 [C]	9, 8 1/2, 6, 7, 6 1/2, 6, 5 1/2, 5, 5, 5 ins.	Point " " just above Newbridge (10)
7/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	4 [L]	5, 6, 5, 7 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
8/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	2 (6)	6, 6, ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
9/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	2 (1)	9, 6, ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
10/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	0	5, 0 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
11/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	0	3, 6, 7 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
12/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	3 (6)	3, 6, 7 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
13/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	9 (4)	9 1/2, 9, 8 1/2, 8 1/2, 8 1/2, 8 1/2, 8 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
14/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	13 (8)	9 1/2, 9, 8 1/2, 8 1/2, 8 1/2, 8 1/2, 8 1/2, 8 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
15/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	16 (3)	8 1/2, 7 1/2, 7 1/2, 7, 6 1/2, 7 - 3 1/2 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
16/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	6 (2)	8, 7 1/2, 4 1/2, 4 1/2, 3, 2, 2 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)
17/4/57	3	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)	2 (2)	9 1/2, 9 ins.	Point on Rowley sp (Gauld)



DATE	PLACE	"NOS"	"ANY NOTABLE FISH"	"BAIT"	"REMARKS"
23/6/57	Ludge Gill	9 [3]	7 1/2 - 3 in	Worm	Some quite nice
25/6/57	Lure - above L. Inn	3 [1]	9 1/2 in, 6, 5.	Worm (9 1/2) Fly - stone	U.T. W. W.
26/6/57	Raottery - riverside	2 [1]	9 3/4, 3 in	" (2)	"
27/6/57	Lure - L.I. Br just above.	4 [2]	10 1/4, 8 1/4 [Sea Trout]	" (4)	Slightly coloured - after try spin
29/6/57	Raottery - Millthrop br	0 [0]		Worm, sea trout	Wt many sea - trout
30/6/57	Raottery - Round Raottery	9 [4]	8 1/4, 8, 7 3/4, 7 1/2	2 or worm 2 or large	Quite good. - went in
7/7/57	Raottery - Birks	1 [0]	6 3/8	Fly	Edgen lower by country
14/7/57	" - Above N.R.	3 [1]	9, 7, 6	worm (in fact worm)	no good - water
21/7/57	" above Cross Keys	2 [2]	2, 7 1/2	spinner (minnow in fly)	Water coloured
22/7/57	" " N Br			tried Vibro - hatter	W caught first fish! Spin
28/7/57	Lure above Killingha			spinner - Vibro	Rat had 6 bites -
30/7/57	Little Langdale Beck	7 [1]	7 1/2	Worm - upstream	Much too bright
31/7/57	Yeast tree beck - Yew Tree (small)	7 [0]	[Fish caught on 7 1/2]	"	Not awfully good. -
1/8/57	Black Beck	6 [6]	8 1/2 [very plump]	"	Taking well - but small
2/8/57	" "	12 [2]		"	mostly small but under
5/8/57	Ninnow beck (Atlas High Dam bed)	4 [2]	7 1/2, 7	"	very small beck - lowly con
10/8/57	Black Beck (Below 3 bridge - coffee)	2 [1]	7 1/4, 5	"	water not at a good
11/8/57	" "	1 [0]	6	"	"
12/8/57	Trout Beck (Right at top by hickstr)	2 [1]	7 1/4, 6 3/8	Dry fly - large	A good little stream - quite
14/8/57	Stock Gill (Up Kirkstone way)	7 [7]	8 3/4, 8 1/2, 8 1/4, 7 3/4, 7 1/4, 7 1/2	Spinner - salmon quill	5 1/2 of trout. V's 7 1/2 fly
16/8/57	Little Langdale Tarn	2 [2]	7 1/2, 7 1/2	Fly - Red spinner (wet)	Good in deep pooled backs when
19/8/57	Drumken Tarn	6 (0)		Fly	Two boat - quite nice
20/8/57	Raine Beck (Top of Raottery)	8 (3)	7 1/2, 7 1/2	Worm - upstream	No easy (waste of fly - dead)
22/8/57	Black Beck (smally - just below)	3 (1)	7 3/8, 6, 4	Spinner - brown quill	Quite good - quite easy
7/9/57					Good in wooded area - no



Alan fishing in a tarn

## 1958

Alan to Parents 30th Mar 1958:

*Well done Daddy! It makes my fish back here sound a bit silly. (About 6 to the lb). So far this year I have caught 18 fish of which 4 were takeable. But they are in very poor condition.*

The fishing diary for the Spring records the following:

③ 28/3/58	4	4	17	7½-7, 6½-4¾	Kyddal Seamedale Beck (on fell). Mainly (dry) 2. Red spinners (dry) 3. GRC (11)
④ 3/4/58	4	0	0		Alcock Tarn (only fished 25 mins). Saw 3 good rises
⑤ 8/4/58	1	1	7½"		Windermerre - 3 bags beyond filling station
⑥ 9/4/58	4	1	1	7½"	Seamedale Beck (on fell) No fish below Sweden By
⑦ 15/4/58	3½	0	8	6¾"-2½"	Hosedale Beck - On worm - not dryfly. Not much good
⑧ 16/4/58	4	0	8	6"-2½"	Lingwell Beck - On worm - upstream - " " "
⑨ 17/4/58	1	4	9"-5"		Wastwater - On wet fly - Teal + Red, Butcher " " "

I annotated the above entries with further details, referring to the numbers beside them, as follows:

3. Fairly Windy (gusts) but warmer. Tried spinning in deep pools below fell – no good. Trout rising quite well on fell. Would take any dry fly. 3 foul hooked. All rather small. I took 6 out so that the rest could grow a bit. Quite nice weather when it stopped raining. The trout were up in the fast water. Not in very good condition yet. Quite a few flies hatching (Brown silverhorns or brown duns?) – all brown. The fish had 2 caddis larva (stone) inside them.

4. It takes about an 1½ [hour] to get to the tarn. It is National Trust, and it is about 30 yards

by 100. It looks good and I saw several good rises. Try later on in the season.

5. Caught on Butcher in about 4 ft of water. From Davids boat, had another rise. I only fished about 15 minutes. The Boweness side better – smallish flies 3-8 ft of water – best months April, May, June. Only when there is a wind.

6. There were no fish until about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile above the bridge. Then there were a few. The bottom was rock and so not so many trout as Rydal Beck. Only about 2 or 3 per pool. But there were several above 8 ins.

The new factor in my fishing was my motorbike, so that the summer of 1958 was the first when I could explore further afield, and in particular go to the Duddon River where there were sea trout. My excited account of my first visit to fish in the Duddon has already been quoted at length (in the letter of 16 August 1958)



Duddon above Cockley Bridge, here I caught a sea trout

I was really keen to catch fish and so I spent some time drawing maps of the best stretches of the rivers around Sedbergh school, and over the winters I would analyse what baits and places were best. Here are two of the tables.

## Rivers, Becks, and Tarns

Size	Name	Situation	Grade
M.B.	Black Beck.		xx
L.B.	Cursey Beck.	Esthwaite - Windermere	0
S.B.	Glen Mary Beck	Tarns - Coniston	xx
L.B.	Hebblethwaite Gill	Boar Fell - Rawthey	xx
L.B.	Rydal Park Beck	Rydal Park (Rydal $\Rightarrow$ )	0
M.B.	Yewdale Beck	Wetherlam - Coniston	xx
M.B.	Thrush Gill.	- Rawthey	x/
L.B.	Church Beck.	Levers Water - Coniston	-
L.B.	Satterthwaite Beck	Grisedale Hall - Leven	x/
L.B.	Rydal Beck.	Fairfield Basin - Rothay	xxx
M.B.	Scandale Beck.	N <sup>r</sup> " " - Rothay	xx/
L.B.	Longdale Beck	Great Longdale Valley - Elterwater	xx
M.B.	Raise Beck	Kirkstone Pass - Brothers Water.	xx
<u>RIVERS</u>			
S.M.R.	Rawthey ♂	Boar Fell - Lune ( $\Rightarrow$ Sedburgh)	xxx
S.R.	Dee	Dent - Rawthey (" " )	xx
S.R.	Clough	- Rawthey (" " )	xx
M.B.R.	Lune (+ Salmon)	Lunesdale	xx
M.R.	Brathay	Elterwater - Windermere	xx
M.R.	Rothay	Rydal lake - Windermere	xx
S.R.	Troutbeck	Troutbeck village - "	xx
S.R.	Gowan	Ings (nr Windermere) - kent	xx
<u>TARNS</u>			
L.T.	Tarn Howes		x
S.T.	School Knott Tarn	Near Windermere - kendal Road	x
S.T.	Grisedale Tarn	Nr Grisedale Hall	x
S.T.	High House Tarn	Nr Berwick Fold N <sup>r</sup> Hawkshead	xx

0 = Have not tried  
 x = Fishable  
 xxx = Good fishing  
 xx = Worth fishing, not bad  
 ♂ = Have drawing of.  
 M = Medium  
 S = Small  
 ♂ = Old



The kind of small stream or beck which I most enjoyed fishing

DRY FLIES

Greenwells Glory 1. 1. 1. 1. 5\* 3. 4. 7. 10. 2. 9. 13. 4. 1. 1. 2. 1.

Olive Dun

Red Spinner

Black Gnat 10\* 1\*

Alder

Iron Blue

Rough Olive

Badger 1. 2. 2.

Pale Watery

Black Spider 1\* 2

March Brown 1. 2\*

Red Upright 1. 1.

Wickham 1.

Dusty grey 2

SPINNER 4. 2.

WORM. 2. 16. 9. 7. 2. 4. 3. 3. 4. 7. 6. 12. 2. 1. 1. 4. 2. 1. 1.

" WET FLIES "

March Brown

Snipe and Purple 1. 3\* 2\* 5\* 4\* 1\*

Butcher

Greenwell's Glory

Partridge + Orange 1. 1.\*

Black Zulu 1.\* 1.\*

- \* = Home Tied.
- + = Parachute
- 1 = Ordinary shop Hackled.
- 0 = " " winged.

## Rock and Skiffle



Alan with guitar in the Walnut Coffee Bar, Ambleside



In the groove

Until I reread the letters of this period I had forgotten how important the 'pop' revolution of the second half of the 1950s was. Only then did I realise that one of my chief excitements of the period was listening to, discussing, and even attempting to play on my guitar, this new 'pop' music.

The TV show 'Top of the Pops' was important. Our first family television set arrived on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1957, along with VHF (Very High Frequency) radio. After that every Thursday, when we were at home, we could watch 'Top of the Pops' on BBC 1, which had started to be broadcast on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1954. When I was at school my mother or sister could update me. There was even a radio version of the programme in India which my mother tried to listen to in order to compare notes with me in my letters.

A second major change was the way in which we could hear recorded music. Records were improving very fast. My first memory of a family gramophone was the one which my parents bought in the summer of 1957 when they were on leave, just before the Television. The need for this device had been pointed out at the start of 1957 by my sister Fiona, then aged twelve, in a letter to my parents. She wrote *I have got a craze on David Whitfield I think he's smashing absolutely wonderful. He sings "My September Love" which I love.... I'm going to save up for a gramophone because Alan wants to get Gilbert and Sullivan" and I want to get "My September Love" and Anne wants "The Toyshop Ballet". Have you got a gramophone in India - if so what records have you got?*

The new gramophone, which we took out onto the lawn, was a wind-up device which played old vinyl records revolving at 78 revolutions per minute ('78's') using a heavy arm holding a needle. The first record, which I remember sent a thrill through me, was Pat Boone's 'Red Sails in the Sunset'. At first we only had a few records as they were expensive and the device was primitive. It seems that the first gramophone was faulty and my mother wrote to my father on 27 September 1957 about a trip to Kendal and to say that that the gramophone would not play properly.

Very soon the extended play (EP) came along, smaller and better quality, playing at 45 revolutions per minute, and around the same time the LP or Long-Playing record at 33 rpm. The relative price of records was also dropping rapidly and reaching a level where we could start to think of making a collection. The gramophones were improving – electric rather than wind-up, with much lighter needles which did not chip away at the vinyl.

I am not sure when tape-recorders became available to us, though they were being used more widely from the 1950s. I remember having my own, and recording Bach's Coffee Cantata in my bedroom at Field Head.

The context was also changing. In particular the growth of coffee bars or clubs of a sort where teenagers would meet and listen to the top pops played on a juke-box is a strong memory. This was a later 1950s phenomenon, though I suspect my strongest memories, which attach to the Walnut Coffee Bar, owned by my close friend Martin Buckmaster, date from around 1960 or so.

It was not merely that we could now listen to the music on new machines but also that when others, or we ourselves, played and sang, the sound was much louder and richer. This was due to the electrification of music. There were now microphones and electric guitars, which enormously affected music. It is difficult to think of Elvis, Cliff or Buddy Holly having the same effect in a world without microphones or electric guitars.

My guitar clearly became an object of importance for me - witness the fact that I dragged it to Assam. Above all I found that it liberated me. As with acting, sport, fishing, it combined the mind and the body and allowed me to behave in freer ways. I could shout, weep, be ridiculous or tender while singing. It was a musical release equivalent to yard football, ice hockey or my motorbike.

\*



A first locally recorded sighting of new modes of dress is in a letter from my sister Fiona to my mother on 11th Jan 1957. She wrote to India saying *Do tell me what "Rock about the Clock" is like. There are lots of Rocking tunes but I think the one in it is "1 o'clock 2 o'clock 3 o'clock ROCK!" There is a Teddy Boy in Hawkshead. He wears black shiny trousers which get higher at the bottom with elastic and bright green socks and a sort of old-fashioned hair. I've seen him twice!* This links the new rock with the new fashions more widely.

I then wrote the following day, 12<sup>th</sup> January, showing we were already comparing notes on the radio programme 'Top Twenty' and that 'Singing the Blues' had come on the scene. *I wonder what your "Top Twenty" are now, did they ever include "Green Door" and "A house with love in it". By the way Fiona is a budding David Whitfield fan so be careful what you say about him! By the way I have just heard another good tune called "Singing the Blues" I wonder if you have heard it.*

The pop songs which began to haunt our lives, and the way in which they were brought to us through various rankings, the television 'Top of the Pops', and the 'Pick of the Pops' broadcast from 1955 onwards on the Light Programme of the BBC (which gave rise to the 'Top Twenty') are mentioned a number of times. At the bottom of a letter my mother wrote to me on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1957 from the Lakes there is added:

#### Top Twenty

- Heart (2) Butterfly (3) Young love (4) Singin' the Blues (5) True Love (6) Banana Boat (7) Look homeward Angel (8) Mangos, papayas (9) Don't forbid me (1) Mary Anne (11) Rock-a-billy (12) Knee deep in the blues (13) 99 ways (14) I'll find you (15) Chapel of the Roses (16) Adoration Waltz (17) Cumberland Gap (18) The Wisdom of a fool (19) All (20) Good Companions

I'm not sure what 'Heart' is – perhaps Heartbreak Hotel, and certainly Cumberland Gap was Lonnie Donegan.

My mother mentioned in a Memoranda book among the memories she was storing up to take back to Assam 'the white mice and David Whitfield, ... the Pick of the Pops and the murder stories...'

In my copy of the Sedbergh school *Brown Book* for Winter 1957 I have only written in one item, reflecting my general interest in pop music both at home and at school, as follows.

#### Top Twenty

- 1st Alone
- 2nd Special Anjel
- 3rd Mary's boy child [Harry Belafonte]
- 4th Tammy [Kathy Kay]
- 5th Diana [Paul Anka]
- 6th Wake up little Susie [King Brothers]
- 7th I love you baby [Paul Anka]
- 8th Forgotten dreams [Mr Jo "Piano" Henderson]
- 9th Ma he's making eyes at me
- 10th Kisses sweeter than wine
- 11 April love (Pat Boone)
- 12 Remember your mine [Pat Boone]
- 13 He's got the whole world in his hand [Laurie London]
- 14 Let me be loved
- 15 An affair to remember
- 16 Be my gal
- 17 Puttin on the style (Lonnie Donegan)
- 18 That'll be the day (Buddy Holly)

19 Man on fire [Franky Vaughan]  
20 Island in the sun

[The artists in square brackets are in the original.]

There is a good deal of the older type of song, but also 'Wake up little Susie' and Lonnie Donegan and Buddy Holly for the trendy ones among us.

My mother continued to keep me informed and show her interest, noting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1958 (presumably in relation to 'Pick of the Pops' which was later than the 6.30 pm. 'Top of the Pops'), that she did not like the new Elvis Presley. When she returned to India she continued to send me lists of top hits from the Indian hit parade, for example on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1958 writing that:

*"Wake up little Suzy" still at the top here, with "April Love" second and "With you on my mind" (Nat King Cole and my favourite) third. Tommy Steele, Paul Anka and Co. don't seem to have registered here. Later in the year she wrote on 25<sup>th</sup> July, "Are you Sincere" is still at the top of Hit Parade here, with "Twilight time" second. What do you think of Laurie London's latest effort? I've got no particular favourite at the moment, rather like Frank Sinatra singing "Tell her you love her", the usual drippy choice.*

\*

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 1958 my mother asked from Assam, *How's the guitar? I like the Tom Dooley boys latest.* She then gave me news that she had heard from my grandmother, of an event which would greatly enrich my musical life in the Lake District where, up to now, I had played on my own. On 16<sup>th</sup> November she wrote:

*You and the boy-next-door will get on well as he is very musical apparently and plays several things, you might join the Kendal musical society which gives very good weekly concerts I believe. So typical that you are the only one we never had taught the piano! Between you you should start a local skiffle group, call yourselves the Hawkshead Hotpoints or Wordsworth Wide Boys, and make lots of money playing at the local hops. I wish I could bring home a couple of the local drummers, they'd make the place hum.*

My musical circle was expanded around this time when I came to know Steve Darbishire whose father was a doctor in Coniston. Steve was a couple of years older and an excellent musician, pianist, guitarist and singer. He had already been part of a group, the 'Yum Yum's', which had recorded a single, and he played Ray Charles, especially 'Blueberry Hill' and Fats Waller in a wonderful way. I remember one session with him and Martin in which I suddenly felt the uplift of playing with a professional – and a burning desire to form the very group which my mother suggested – though whether the Wordsworth Wide Boys was a better name than the Yum Yum's, I am not sure!

Certainly, three weeks before she returned from Assam, my mother anticipated the jam sessions. She wrote on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1959 about longing for log fires and skiffle sessions. And skiffle there was, for example at the first party which my sisters and I had ever given. I recorded in my diary that on 6<sup>th</sup> January there was 'Skiffle - low lights - broken glasses.'

\*

I don't think I ever went to any pop concerts, but I did, with others, see films of my heroes and watch them on television. One account of a film of Elvis towards the end of my time at Sedbergh shows a little of my reactions. I wrote on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1959 from the Lakes to my parents.

*This evening I am going to celebrate my exam results by going to see a film which I have wanted to see for a*

very long time "King Creole" - with that "hep" "Cat" Elvis Presley. We have the record at school and it is really quite "cool" (I will give you an explanation of any of these words which you don't know when you come back.) Also I believe that the audiences in these rock'n roll films are equally worth watching. I am continuing after seeing the film! I was surprised not to find the cinema particularly full. The actual film was mainly a series of interludes of Elvis singing some rock n' roll number with a rather imbecile grin on his face and jerking backwards and forwards in a most odd fashion; alternatively one would come to the type of scene where Elvis was surrounded by a gang of thugs and was beating them all up. Despite this however I enjoyed the film very much indeed - especially the music. Although I felt it to be most non-u' I could not restrain my feet from tapping! The Ambleside audience were most lethargic however, not even one little scream or sob did I hear!

## Dances and girlfriends

In *Dorset Days*, I had already had 'girl friends' from the age of about seven in my kindergarten. I had no particular natural interest in my sisters' anatomy. My only serious 'crushes' were on two other little boys, both in my own year, at the Dragon, one of whom, at least, I remember kissing once. My interest in pretty chorus girls or obtaining pin-ups for the Prefect's study, which mildly amused and shocked my mother, were fairly low key.

So I went to the Lakes with an unbroken voice, but on the edge of the age of sexual excitement. My attitude to girls and to sex was obviously largely conditioned by my home life. There were diverse influences. One was the attitude of my parents and grandparents. My research into the social life of my ancestors in the last days of the Raj in Burma and India through my mother's diaries show that in the years from 16-18 my mother lived in a whirl of dances and flirtation. Even after some years of marriage, my grandmother had also enjoyed the same excitements of numerous dances, gossip and flirtations in the winter retreats of the Raj. They were therefore well aware of the needs and pleasures of youth. Apart from some anxieties over my sisters, especially Fiona, they were broadly encouraging of our desire to meet girls and boys and have a gay social life.

A second factor was that I had younger sisters, and particularly Fiona, two years younger than me, with attractive school friends and who were, in terms of sexual social development, roughly at my age. Fiona's vivacious character made the house buzz.

The fact that during the last two years of this period in the Lake District the other half of the house was the home of the Buckmasters, who had a son, Martin, about my age, a lively, car-driving, friendly young man who played music and liked giving parties, meant that our house as a whole became a kind of club or social centre for a certain group of middle-class kids in that part of the Lakes.

The Lakes at that time was just starting to be a serious mass tourists' area and also a retirement zone. So alongside much larger population of local farmers, tradesmen and others, there was a thin layer of children of professionals (Steve Darbishire, son of a doctor), widows (Stephen Grieve), people with second homes from the industrial north (Anne Johnson, the Listers), retired businessmen and army types (the Manzi Fe's and my grandparents). We formed into a sort of 'gang' and particularly when I was turning into an eighteen-year-old, we partied – helped by the rising affluence which meant that we could afford transport – cars, motorbikes and scooters.

No account of the atmosphere of love, romance, partying and excitement would be at all comprehensible without noting the way in which pop music – and the new dances such as 'jiving', which went with it (and which Fiona taught me), loosened inhibitions.

Of course the situation, in a way, was only returning to that which my grandparents and parents had known before the war in far-off India and Burma – plenty of food and drinks, gramophones and music. Yet it was now much more widespread through British society. And the degree of parental control through the old chaperoning system had completely broken down. We certainly felt we were living through a revolution, that something seismic was happening, that a new age was being born. Only a few scraps of the change remain recorded in my papers and memories. But the dimensions are rather nicely gate-posted or marked at the start and end by two events which have remained particularly strongly in my memory.

\*

The Doogan dance was the first serious teenage dance my sister and I had been to. Mike Doogan would not normally have been a school friend, as he was about two years older than me. But his father was head of the Outward Bound centre at Brathay, about four miles away from our home. When I started at Sedbergh my family negotiated that I would be taken back

and forth to school in the Doogan's car with my school trunk. So it was not altogether surprising that when Mike organised a dance for Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 1957 I should be invited, aged just 15. The account of the invitation is in a letter from me on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1957:

*On Thursday [10th Jan.] we went in to Kendal to do some shopping and we saw Doogan and a friend of his who is staying the holidays with him (he is going to be our next head of house). And then after lunch Doogan rang up and asked me to come over on Tuesday to a dance lasting from 6-10 o'clock. I am going by the 4.50 bus and I am going to spend the night there as I can't get back at that time.*

What was more surprising was the invitation to my sister, then only twelve and three quarters. I suspect that at the last moment, Mike and his friend, found that they were short of girls. This seems to be implied by my sister's account of the invitation process, which shows that it was at the last minute that she was invited, and that the party was co-organised by the head of Lupton House, Dave Philip.

Fiona wrote in her diary on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> January, 'Dave Philip rang Alan up (he is 18 and head of house) and told him to bring me to the Dance he and Dugan are going to give on Tuesday. I wish I needn't GO!' But it was an order, so my sister was duly prepared. On the Monday, 'went to Ambleside to have my hair cut – awfully short. I got a new dress I am going to get it tomorrow and at 4.30 I am going to the party.' On the day of the party she wrote 'Rose. I went to Ambleside and got my new dress and in the afternoon we went to the dance. I LUV Dave! We met Julie Bruce. Remember.'

Whether the Dave she fell for was the Dave Philip, five years older than her, I don't remember. But it appears that she enjoyed herself. My grandfather noted in his diary on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 'Alan and Fiona go to Doogan's party'. My own diary records for that date 'Went to D's dance. Quite good fun. Went with Fiona.' That is all, but it seems to indicate it went well.

My own memory over fifty years later is that the dance was held in a long, wooden, building, perhaps one of the training centres for Brathay. There were chairs along the walls on either side where a few boys and girls sat in embarrassed groups. There were still a few decorations from Christmas and the music and lighting was subdued. I think I was wearing my kilt and certainly some very 'sensible' black laceless shoes – like slippers and very shiny.

I remember finally suggesting to Fiona that we danced – and we duly danced some kind of fox-trot or shuffle of the kind I had been taught at the Dragon, and perhaps a waltz. I do not remember other girls but still feel a slight sense of embarrassment at having to dance with my sister. Perhaps it was more lively than I remember, but it seemed, in the light of later parties, very formal and old-fashioned.

\*

After this not altogether propitious start, we must have been to other parties and dances in the ensuing couple of years. Indeed we had been to an earlier one when my uncle Robert got married on 20<sup>th</sup> August in 1956, but we did not participate in the dancing which was for older guests.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1957 my mother recounted 'an exhausting day tramping Kendal in search of Fiona's wardrobe - a party frock this time', so a party was clearly in the offing. And on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1959 my grandfather's diary notes 'Fiona dentist and dance at Giggleswick Jane Entwistle'. I remember 'Jane Ent' as a close friend, but whether the party had anything to do with the public school at Giggleswick I do not know.

A missed opportunity came when I went to stay with my school friend Ian Campbell in 1958. On 4<sup>th</sup> May I wrote to my parents, *Newcastle was as bad as Bournemouth for being crowded. But there was one great advantage over the Lake District and that was the considerably larger number of eligible females who thronged the streets and no doubt were present at the numerous public (and private) dances which*

*my friend (who unfortunately does not know many of the girls) told me of?*

To this my mother replied in her characteristic way, expressing the same mixture of surprise and amusement that she had shown when I had noticed pretty chorus girls at a much earlier age than she had expected.

*Also glad to hear you enjoyed Newcastle, though I was surprised you were interested in the females - like most mothers I imagine my children to stick at a mental age of about twelve - though when you think of it I was only a year older than you are now when I met Daddy! I'm afraid we can't offer you any eligible females out here, all middle-aged planters wives and madly dull, but we have a tennis court!*

Yet there is surprisingly little about girls or parties in either the papers or my memories for the period between Doogan's dance and the explosion of partying in the winter holiday 1959/60. Whether there was little socialising, which seems unlikely, or the events, parties with Anne Johnson and Anne Hogg, the Boddingtons and others, were rather genteel and low level so I have forgotten them, I do not know. During the main party season of 1958/9 over Christmas and my seventeenth birthday my sisters and I were in Assam on holiday, I do vaguely recall some much younger, but pretty girls, at the club.

Yet as I reached my formal adulthood, my eighteenth birthday, with Martin Buckmaster now living next door, with a motorbike of my own, with my friends increasingly owning cars, there was a sudden transition of activity. In some ways this was my coming of age – my first serious kiss, my first intimate 'cheek to cheek' dancing, the first party I hosted, the explosion into another world. Thanks to my mother's letters, some of the excitements of teenagers are captured even fifty years later.

\*

My mother returned from two and a half years away from England, having left us as gawky sub-teenagers, to find us much changed. She was thrown into a different world as she describes in her letters. I returned from school on 17<sup>th</sup> December, three days before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It had been a particularly stressful term and my mother described in her letter of 27<sup>th</sup> December how

*Alan is tired and a little depressed after an exhausting term, he says he didn't do well in his exams and the chances of him getting to either Oxford or Cambridge are 1 in 12 apparently, because of the "bulge". I shall go over and see Mr Marriott next term. Alan is to be a school prefect next term which is very good, but he still seems to have endless exams in front of him poor darling.*

Yet tiredness was not to stand in the way of social excitement and in the front of my 1960 diary I note:

Dates of dances:

- i) 19<sup>th</sup> – Jill's - 4
- ii) 23<sup>rd</sup> – Davids 2 1/2
- iii) 28<sup>th</sup> – Robertson's 2
- iv) Pony Club(?) [Crossed out]

The first party was clearly near Windermere, so was possibly one of Fiona's school friends. Certainly David's was David Manzi-Fe. The Robertsons' were my uncle Robert's parents-in-law in Cartmel. These dances and what surrounded them is partially described in a letter from my mother to my father just after Christmas on 27<sup>th</sup> December.

*Darling one -*

*I just can't remember if it's more or less than a week since I wrote darling - but as you can imagine life has*

been ONE MAD RUSH - and I'm trying to write this to the Telly as it is. ... So much has happened in the last ten days (or is it ten weeks?) that I can't possibly write it all down at the moment, specially as we're still in the middle of it. Until the children go back to school you must expect hectic scrawls I'm afraid, they go early (January 15th) so we shall have very little let-up... They've been to 2 dances so far and have another to-morrow. I wish you could see Fiona in her new pink and silver party dress, with her hair brushed and a little make-up she looks a picture and comes bursting in at 2 a.m. to tell me of the latest gorgeous chap who danced with her all evening, Alan is very smooth on the dance floor these days and mad keen so they're both enjoying the social whirl - they have 4 more yet and I fear I shall be a nervous wreck. The first dance Alan went to on his motorbike... Fiona came back in a taxi, I made her go in the bus after fearful groans and "Honestly I cant's" - She has no idea of economy she says at frequent intervals "Mummy all you've talked about since you came back is money"! Don't know how to impress our situation on her, the only hope is that she'll pick up a rich boyfriend pretty quick! The other dance was the Manzi Fe's, which was most unsuitably un-teenagish - bottles of champagne and everyone disappearing in couples into cars. I don't know how one is supposed to look after one's young these days! ... It was a nice Christmas and I didn't get as worn out as usual, yesterday I had a quiet day cleaning up nut-shells and tangerine peel and at tea time the Boddingtons (boy and girl) arrived at tea time and we had a noisy evening of gramophones and Telly. The boy is now Fiona's pet hate, he is a bit of a goof I must say, but then so are all the 18 year old boys I've met. Fiona's chief love is Mike Doogan's friend, an M.P's son who is an instructor at Braithie. Mike is going "steady" with a friend of hers at school, they're all so ridiculously young and they know everything it's quite funny, only a bit worrying too. They look on me as a prehistoric relic who knows nothing about men at all, in fact would hardly recognise one if I saw one!

A day later on the 28<sup>th</sup> we went to Cartmel and the Robertsons' party. My mother briefly describes this in a letter of 1<sup>st</sup> January to my father.

*They all 3 went to a dance at Angela's parents but found it a bit dull and all got their feet well trodden on. Annie has to be driven out of the house with a horsewhip but quite enjoyed it.*

Clearly it was the old-fashioned waltz and foxtrot kind of dance, and all of us had lost our skills in such dancing by then.

Things heated up even more after the New Year. On the 1<sup>st</sup> I note in my diary 'Dance (Martin's)? - Tennis Club at Greenock - not bad - the drive back with Jacky etc good fun.' Jacky was Jacky Lister, Martin's girlfriend. The following day was one of the turning points in my romantic life, enigmatically described in my diary on 2<sup>nd</sup> as following. 'Dance - Piggy. Quite good fun - a terrible drive over on my motorbike. Mike on top form. My first kiss - Jill (to repay Mike - I danced quite a bit with Jill as there were no other pretty girls really)'. My mother described the event in her letter of 5<sup>th</sup> January to my father: *On Saturday they went over to Piggy's, Fiona in a bus, Alan hiccupping off into the night on his motorbike.*

The following day we were off again, as described in my diary on 3<sup>rd</sup>. 'Dance - Louise's. We went again with Martin. Consisted mostly of odd games (slave market etc) - Sally Atkinson the only decent girl but 5' 8" and nabbed off by Simon Manby.' Simon Manby, I suspect, not only had the height (I was five foot six), but was also, as I remember, very handsome - one of my sister's targets.

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The result of all this was that as the day of our own party approached, we were getting into a state of feverish exhaustion. The culmination of all of this, and one of the enduring memories of my late teens, was the first real dance party which my sisters and I had given. In her letter of 27<sup>th</sup> December my mother had noted:

*the next Thing being our dance on 6th. They (or rather A and F) are in a state of wild excitement about it and sit around making lists with lots of question marks next to most of the names - we're approaching the*

30 mark as they collect a few more "smashing" types each time they go out.

The party itself was held at the house of our friend and neighbour Mrs Knappett, who was away over Christmas and in whose house my grandparents were staying. This was about fifteen minutes walk from our house, and without any transport (my father was in India), the logistics were particularly difficult. But the party occurred, as my grandfather noted in his diary of 6<sup>th</sup> January. 'Dance at High Grassings'.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January, in a panicky letter about money to my father, my mother wrote:

*Could you please cable some money quickly darling and I'll try and pacify them for another week or so. Terribly sorry about this but I'm trying to be economical but Christmas has been the blot, and Alan's suit and F's party dress ... once this ruddy party is over I hope not to have to spend anything more... Our "do" is on the 6th so think of us! Everybody is busily writing lists of what they want to eat, shrimp patties, mushroom flans etc! They'll be lucky! It's all a bit of a nightmare for me, but I try not to damp their enthusiasm and I suppose we shall scramble through somehow. Trying to entertain all those people and not spend anything is my chief problem.*

Four days later on 5<sup>th</sup> she wrote about last minute preparations.

*My darling,*

*Our preparations haven't quite reached fever pitch, that'll come to-morrow and I have a tiny bottle of brandy by me to meet all the ghastly crises that are bound to arise. It's very complicated as we have to carry all our stuffed eggs and cellotape up to the Knappetts and Mummy keeps sending down messages for the long lace tablecloth in the bottom trunk in the shed! We're having sausage rolls, mushroom patties, chippolata sausages, cheese straws, salmon mould and sardine rolls plus various jellies and my plaster of paris meringues. We've made it all except the sausage rolls which I've ordered, the only real complications are Mummy with all her bright and impractical ideas, Mrs K's cats which take fright and disappear every time strangers appear, and Fiona who is so terrified we shall shame her in front of her friends that Mummy and I think we shall have to crawl about on our hands and knees with periscopes! ... We've absolutely lost count of whose coming to the dance and can't imagine where they'll park their cars, never mind I'll write and tell you all about it, we shall have some laughs I don't doubt.*

I gave a slightly longer account of the proceedings in my diary of 6<sup>th</sup> January. 'OUR DANCE. Absolutely hectic. Ian and Fred, Dave and Alan all came. Skiffle - low lights - broken glasses. Annette etc all contributed. The first time I have danced cheek to cheek for over an hour - wonderful - it went pretty well - despite various things - stopped about 2.30 - v. enjoyable.'

Ian [Campbell], Fred [Watson], David [Porter] and Alan [Barnes] were all close friends from Sedbergh School. Annette was the daughter of a friend of my grandparents. She clearly stayed another day but nothing progressed, for I noted the next day. 'Saw Annette again - but was unable to see her alone - they went home - we spent the day eating up the eats etc.'

The fullest account of the actual party, written in a letter from my mother to my father on 7<sup>th</sup> January, a day after the event, catches something of the spirit.

*My darling,*

*Blissful peace, we're sitting in front of the fire eating left-over sausage rolls and the relief is terrific - after 2 hours sleep and 4 extra people in the house I'm pretty tired but it's a jolly nice sort of tiredness. Alan, Anne and I have slumped out Fiona is up at David's painting the cellar for a "dive"! Her energy is fantastic, they weren't in bed till 4 a.m. and have been dashing about all day, I'll write you a long letter about it in detail, but just wanted to let you know the party was a success - at least I imagine so by the noise and the hour it broke up - 3 a.m. and only then because Mummy kept going in and glaring at the clock apparently! I walked home at*



midnight, as I was dead beat, had been dashing backwards and forwards all day with salmon moulds, the first lot of guests arrived at mid-day and they continued to dribble in till 9 when the party officially started. I don't think it cost too much, I put a 10/- bottle of whisky into cider for a hot punch and a 6/- bottle of wine into cider for the cup, and there were some soft drinks and that was all. The eats looked wonderful when they were spread out, but very little was eaten so we've had stuffed eggs for every meal since. Two of Alan's friends were due, and then another two suddenly turned up, but luckily the Buckmasters filled the gap, they're wonderful value. Martin spent the day ferrying everybody about. There were about 30 people and Fiona had the whale of a time being fought over by the 2 best looking boys, Alan got off with the prettiest girl so they both enjoyed it, though there were odd awkward-looking figures looming when I peered round the door at intervals - daren't let myself be seen! I hope that would be their last party but they've just been invited out again to-morrow. All the young men Fiona meets have their own cars and yachts and are altogether out of our class, most of them are nice boys, but one of the 15 year old girls we offered a punch to said she never drank anything but gin actually! The part I hate is the driving, thank goodness they aren't going out to-night as there is thick fog and frost, it's awful cold.

So the big event was over, though not the end of the parties, for two days later I noted in my Diary on 8<sup>th</sup> January. 'Then an odd "Record" hop at Anne Johnson's. Vivien Morton and I spent the evening watching the others all kissing each other.'

### Girlfriends

On 16th January my mother wrote again to my father:

*He has quite fallen for Annette G (the grand-daughter of Dorothy Black, the writer - click?). She is a ravishing platinum blond so I fear he'll have a lot of competition, and I'm afraid the happy days of fobbing him off with Daddy's old corduroys are coming to an end. I suppose they had to soon.*

I clearly wrote to her from school, to which I had returned on Friday 15th January. From a letter dated 21 January from Annette at Carnforth, it is clear that our ardour had not cooled off. Here is the first letter I ever received from a potential girl-friend.

*My dear Alan,*

*At last! I have managed to get down to writing to you – ever since your letter arrived I have been meaning to, and I'm terribly sorry I didn't do it sooner.*

*I can't tell you how pleased I was to hear from you. I too had been hoping to see you before the end of the hols' it was maddening that I wasn't there both times you could have come over. Why ever did you think it was because I didn't want to see you!?!?! We could have had a better conversation on the telephone, but like you I was awfully tongue tied, actually it is terribly difficult in our house as the telephone is where everyone can hear exactly what is being said! I knew Mummy would hear and when I heard it was you I became frightfully flustered, but wished afterwards I had kept calmer!!!*

*I shall never forget your dance for lots of reasons; the main being getting to know you. The others, or at least some of them, you can guess!! (they are to do with you!!). Its wonderful to think that there are only ten weeks until next holidays – to me this seems a terribly short time; I do so hope we get lots of chances to meet then.*

*You did sound terribly depressed in your letter about being locked up at school, it can't really be that bad – but then I suppose I don't really understand what its like. I must admit that I think I am frightfully lucky not being forced into the atmosphere of school which I know I would loathe. But even for me term time is slightly gloomy and it seems even more so after the gaiety of last holidays. Austria certainly is something to look forward to though; I will write and tell you all about it and what I do.*

*By the way about the photo, I haven't got one I would dream of sending you – they are all frightfully out of date anyway, but I'll get one taken as I've a film in my camera and if its at all passable I will send it. I'm bound to get some in Austria too, so I'll send one then; but I'm awfully particular about photos of me as I don't think I'm at all photogenic! Please could I have one of you?? (as long as it looks like you!)*

*You seem to have wonderful ideas for next holidays, I do hope one of them anyway comes off. I adore*

*Barbecues, in fact next to dances I think they are the nicest way of entertaining.*

*You ask me to tell you about myself, but really it's awfully difficult to on paper; if I try I'm sure it will sound like a governesses reference or something like that!! You'll probably find out for yourself anyway as time goes by!*

*... Do please write again soon, with a photo if possible, and I will do my best to get one for you.*

*I really must stop now as my guilty conscience tells me to get on with my Shakespeare prep – what a thought. I'm bound to think of lots of things I meant to say while I'm trying to read it but they'll have to wait*

*With very much love,*

*Xxx Annette xxxxxx*

It is not clear how long Annette was away in Austria; as it was a skiing trip, a couple of weeks at the most, and clearly I wrote to her during that period with a photograph. There is an undated letter from the Sesame Imperial and Pioneer Club, 49 Grosvenor Street, W.1, on her return, only a part of which I shall include.

*My dear Alan,*

*I really feel so awful that I haven't written before this – you must think it terrible of me which I agree it is, ... I will say that there just wasn't a chance in Austria.*

*I really had the most wonderful time I've ever had abroad, and as usual it went far too quickly. Why I couldn't write and didn't write, was because I literally skied all day long and then I shared a room with my Grandmother; so writing anything private was impossible .... Before I forget I must thank you for sending the photo – very much. I certainly didn't carry out any of your instructions. I put it straight into my wallet, where no other photo has ever been!*

*Now my glorious holiday is over I suppose I must start thinking about work – we go up to Aberdeen tonight, I really never felt less like getting down to it ... I expect you are terribly studious and conscientious so you'll frown on my education!*

*The day I got back I got the most awful shock of hearing from Mummy that we've been posted, or at least Daddy has, back to the War Office in June. It's far sooner than we thought ... I think I will have to live in someone's summer house for the summer hols, as otherwise there will only be four weeks when you'll be there. Fate is very unkind. Still I mustn't go on grumbling –*

*If you ever do forgive me for being such an unfaithful writer DO please write – I shall wait in hope,*

*Much love*

*Xxx Annette xxx*

I have not found any more letters from Annette and from an account written in about April, after I had started a relationship with another girl, it seems that my ardour quickly waned.

\*

My first real girlfriend Gill was an important element of that summer before Oxford, and a prelude to the two most meaningful relationships I had as an undergraduate at University. I remember her vaguely, mainly from some photographs, but these memories are given clarity by the discovery of a description of how we met and the start of our relationship.

Gill (for private consumption)

So at the beginning of the Easter holidays I was again on the lookout for a real girlfriend. I had considerably more confidence and I did not find it difficult to secure a girl for the evening at the two dances I went to at the beginning of the holidays. The first girl, the wicketkeeper of Cheltenham Ladies Colleges 1<sup>st</sup> XI, was quite pleasant, but I could show no enthusiasm for her. The same at the next dance where I had the chance of going off with quite a pleasant girl

called Jacky. So I was still free when we decided to give our dance on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April. [The dance was held in the Buckmaster's house, adjoining ours.]

Much sweat was shed trying to pick the guests and I remember that both my sister and myself repeatedly asked Martin whether he really thought that Gill, his girlfriend (or rather adored one-sided) Jacky's sister was old enough to enjoy herself and whether she wouldn't be left out of things. He seemed confident that she could look after herself so we invited her as one of the fifteen or so guests. Among the others I had my eyes on Anne Hogg hoping that perhaps she might feel more inclined to accept my advances than the last time I had seen her.

Preparations were easily completed by about 7.30 and we prepared to meet the guests. The dance-cum record party was to take place in Martin's front room, where we had two gramophones and carefully organised lighting with just a sofa and two chairs in the room and the carpet still down, and to extend into M's bedroom where the food was and also piano, couch (bed) and another gram.

Naturally we were nervous before the guests came and I was annoyed when I was forced through lack of anybody else to go to meet the guests. Anne H & J and David were among the first to arrive – the Hogg wearing jeans and a blue sweater I think. I thought I was off to a good start when Anne H. stayed down with me by the garage and implored me to “protect” her for the evening from 2 ex-boyfriends Mike Boddington and Simon Mambi (whom I was afraid would get her for the evening). I assured her that I would most willingly look after her - thanking my lucky stars for this lead and anticipating a pleasant evening.

A bit later a car which I recognised to be the L's drew up and I met the two sisters at the gate. Jacky was just a bit ahead and they both looked nervous. I said “hullo Jacky, Hullo Gill” and Gill looked surprised – perhaps even worried. Anyhow I lead them up to the house – I don't think I really gave Gill another glance – I was too preoccupied with Anne H. (I never stop cursing myself now).

Anyhow the dance took a time to get going – in fact there wasn't much dancing. Jacky and I had a long talk and I danced with her several times – she was obviously scared of Martin. But she was very sweet and I wished that I could have her; for by this time I was beginning to realise that perhaps the Hogg was not so anxious for me to be her partner after all. This slow realisation spoilt the first half of the dance for me and by 10.0 I was thoroughly fed up. I had danced with Gill once and though she was a clumsy dancer I thought she was rather sweet.

My plan for her however was to palm her off onto a friend who was at his first dance and hence rather awkward and embarrassed. During the time I was chasing Anne several times I saw the two sitting together making awkward conversation. However my eyes were on Anne.

She however fluttered around and paired off with David M-Fé and so I sat down miserably by the wall on the floor, watching them and cursing. I think it was Martin who stirred me and said “go and dance with Gill” – so I did. We got chatting – and I asked her to look after Stephen – to which she didn't reply. Then after 2 or 3 dances I sat down next to her on the sofa by the fire. Slowly the other couples drifted into Martin's room until we alone were left talking by the firelight, and putting piles of records on.

She was wearing jeans – with tights underneath – I could tell because we didn't have shoes on. They were tartan jeans and clothes were one of the things we discussed as well as her school etc – nothing particularly romantic. At last Fiona beseeched me to go into the other room and so we felt we better leave. I had been sitting most of the time comfortably with my arm around her shoulder and indeed she had sat on my knee for a bit – the first girl! Just before we went in to the others Gill turned to me by the gramophone – her back to it and said lifting her face up “thank you Alan”. I was surprised but pleased – took the hint and kissed her on the cheek.

We spent the rest of the evening listening to records, having photos taken and eating in the other room. Although the kiss I had had from her had not thrilled me wildly I think I was beginning to get keen on Gill as I spent the rest of the evening sitting near her on the fender by the fire.

But her mood seemed to change the moment we came into the room and she only smiled a few times at me. She looked slightly tired and worried. So I was a bit discouraged. I think it was either the effect of having Jacky there or she was worried about whether I really liked her.

At about 2 o'clock the party broke up and we set out to look for Mike Bodd & Anne J who had mysteriously disappeared. We found (In pen below: Just before we went we had a pillow fight – one against Jacky & Gill – they loved it) after a pleasant walk (about 6 of us – Gill was cheering up by now) in the tree house – much embarrassment – under the stars.

Then it was time to take the L's home. I wasn't going to go, feeling slightly tired or something, but Gill begged me to – I didn't know why at the time) – so I did. We sang songs on the way back – (Gill, Fiona & Jacky in the back; me & Martin in the front). When we reached there we had some coffee had a chat for half an hour – Gill didn't say much she was either tired or thought I was flirting with Jacky and then got to bed at about 4.0. And that was my introduction to Gill. Perhaps not love at first sight. But rosy glow at least.



Alan and Gill bottom left

### Friday

Martin Fiona and I went over in the afternoon to see the L's. I think they were deliberately trying to hide from us – at least they had told us they were going out but in reality they were messing about in the field behind Rawfell. However we met them by accident (?) and chatted for a bit. Then Gill betted me that I couldn't climb the crag behind their house in 25 mins so I did. Gill wearing gumboots was very quiet and wouldn't come herself. So I scaled the peak by myself and Martin plodded up after. Then after a cup of tea we all went for a drive in Martin's car. The four girls waving and giggling up on the back. Nothing really very romantic.

### Saturday [12 April]

Although we saw the family again at Wittington it was just a friends' meeting – I went round the stalls etc with Gill once – but I felt strangely self-conscious and in the end buried myself in a book. But at least I was more at ease with them than Martin was.

### Sunday [13 April]

This was perhaps the first day when I really fell almost in love with Gill. It was a bank holiday (Easter) and a glorious day. About 2pm Martin rung up and found that the family were in for the afternoon. So me and Martin set off to see them. When we arrived at Rawfell we learnt from the housekeeper that they had set off a few minutes earlier to climb the Pikes so we scooted after them. Naturally there were a lot of people in various coloured jerseys and so we kept thinking that we saw them just ahead of us. We had walked for about ten minutes and crossed a stone wall and a patch of loose stone before we finally saw them – climbing slowly ahead. Martin was already puffing and blowing so I scouted on ahead and suddenly pounced on them as they were there – Jo in a yellow zip-up jacket and very short grey shirt with a tiny bottle of orange juice slung around her neck – Jacky wearing jeans and her white jersey I think while Gill was wearing her tartan jeans (slightly too large for her) and blue jersey and a little red woollen cap or bobble. I think now I will break the sequence of events with an attempt to describe something of her looks.

She is not particularly tall – about 5 ft and of medium to slim build. Not surprisingly at her age – only 14 – her figure is not fully developed. But the outlines are there and give promise of a nice figure – perhaps more on the plump side than skinny? (or rather just right) Her dark brown to black hair curls over a largish forehead and frames a broad and oval face – strikingly wide at the mouth level and with a firm and determined chin. The hair falls to her shoulders and stands fairly high on the head. The mouth is small and firm and suggests a hint of a passionate yet humorous nature. The eyes are a soft and lovely grey – direct yet amused and promises life and a desire to enjoy everything to its full. The brows and lashes are not heavy but expressive. It is a sincere, thoughtful not particularly beautiful but for me at least a bewitching face. [End of account].

Clearly Gill went back to school a week or so after the party, and I wrote to her there. This is part of her reply.

*Acton Reynald Salop 27:4:60*

*My Dearest Alan,*

*Please don't think me too eager replying so soon, but unless I write today, I won't be able to write before you go away.*

*I can't thank you enough for the lovely letter, not meaning to flatter you, but it was the nicest I have received. It was so nice and different. As if I would show your letter to anyone else, it is my own affair (that sounds horrid).*

*I also find that I think of Tuesday [the party], and the day on the mountain. I remember all the odd things. My "heart of ice" as you call it, is red hot, and so don't be silly. I wish you wouldn't call me so young, I know I am, but I hope I have a mind of my own.*

*At first I was afraid you were only being nice to me because I was so young, (I've used it now), but I do hope I am wrong. At the moment, and ever since Tuesday, I have felt I wanted to be nice to everyone, and I feel all wonderful. Don't think me mad. Although you probably do. I can never say what I mean on paper. I still like Robin, but not much, he is more of a friend, not that I don't think your my friend. At least I hope you are. I do wish I could see you to explain what I mean, but that is impossible. I shall live on memories.*

*I think being married to a clergyman would be nice, what's wrong with it, that I should think of horror. Anyway most girls marry for love, and it's the person himself that matters not his 'vocation' (is that the right word.) I shall marry for love, not money, if I marry at all.*

*I hope you have a wonderful time in Norway, and find someone worthy of you. I hope you'll remember me once or twice. I never forget people, I am like an elephant. That makes me conceited, but I don't mean to be. I do want a photo of you, and I am sure any would do you credit. I will send you one of me, but you'll be the one to be put up for life. I do want to see you.*

*All this letter seems to be is about me, and flattering you. But I do miss you. You will properly think me too young, but I'm not. I hope.*

*This is a mad letter, but unlike you I cannot say what I mean on paper. ...*

*You will properly change your mind when you've read this letter. Reading it through, it doesn't sound like me, but I feel all queer, and can't write letters.*

*I am thinking of you, and did not forget Sunday night. But I do hope I am not stopping you enjoying yourself. (Again I am conceited). I won't forget you, or those wonderful days. [asterisk and Thursday, (Friday), (Saturday), Sunday, Tuesday written in below by Alan].*

*I am sorry this is such a terrible letter, but I can't write.*

*All my love,*

*Gill xxxxx*

*P.S. I do want a photo, and to continue to write to you.*



Gill when I first met her

I then went to Norway in early May and the next letter (an air letter) is postmarked 18 May, Bergen, and sent from Acton Reynald School.

*My Dearest Alan,*

*I can't thank you enough for the little seals, they are absolutely adorable. Of course I won't scorn them. (Is that a lie?) I shan't tell you what I've called them, très private! Thank you also for the lovely, long letter, I am afraid this won't be quite as long. Jacky is going to London next hols, so the rest of us will be in the Lakes. I*

*can hardly wait to see you, and it's not a crush!*

*I had a glorious birthday [presumably Gills' 15<sup>th</sup> birthday] ...I do envy you in Norway, but then your plans for next hols, sound marvellous, do you play tennis? Perhaps not!!*

*You mustn't dream of buying me a book, the seals are a glorious present. I will have them on my desk during the English Exam, and then I know I shall pass (At least I hope I will.)*

*I have never been fishing before, so it will be a new experience. I shall properly sink the boat, or at least capsized it. You will have to come and ride Polly in return, Martin is now like a professional Jockey (Bar Size).*

...

*I think your job sounds fun, but it would be funny if you were seasick (aren't I horrid). I haven't an idea what I am going to do when I leave school, I suppose I might go to a finishing school in Switzerland, just to finish me off completely.*

*I will put your mind at rest, though you shouldn't have to wonder, by saying of course I love you, and I thank you again for darling seals. I am sorry I haven't got a photo at the moment. Am thinking of you always. All my love, Gill xxx*

The next letter was written on ordinary paper, to the Lakes I imagine, and would have arrived just after I returned from Norway.

*Acton Reynald Salop 11 June 60*

*My Dearest Alan,*

*Thank you very much indeed for your wonderful letter. I hope (though I know you did) that you had a marvellous time in Norway, and a safe return. How many Norwiegen girls are you writing too.*

*I do wish you could have returned before I returned to my 'nunnery', but that couldn't be helped. Unfortunately it was Daddy's last night, on the day of Martin's party, so we didn't go.*

*What on earth made you think I liked Stephen what-ever-his-name-is? As for Robin at the moment. (Let's change the subject). ...*

*I am very sorry you were seasick; I didn't really want you to be, honestly!! am I forgiven. I can hardly wait till next summer. I can give you a rough idea of when we will be in the Lakes. But it is properly untrue.*

*We won't be there on about the 20<sup>th</sup> of August to the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. As there is a Tennis Tournament on at Hightown (I hate tennis tournaments) and we always play. ....*

*Please write soon, All my love, Gill, xxxxx*

The final letter from Gill is from school and dated 27th June.

*My Dearest Alan,*

*Thank you very much indeed for your wonderful letter. Of course I didn't take offence about the note, I should have written before.*

*I would love to play tennis, but I am afraid I am hopeless, you would have to do all the work. To finish answering your questions, I am also going to London with Jacky, from the 1<sup>st</sup> July to the 23<sup>rd</sup>. We are hoping to see Ben Hur, and a few other shows. It should be great fun. We will all be in the lakes soon after that.*

*You seem to have got a pretty bad impression of me, but what else can you expect when a whole lot of Girls get together!! The things you hear. ...*

*Your boat sounds wonderful. What sort is it!! Last time I went in a boat, I was pushing it off, and forgot to jump. My friend went on rowing, and I went for a swim. It was most uncomfortable.*

*Reading this through, it is just uninteresting paragraphs, but there is just nothing to say. I can hardly wait to see you next hols, and you must come and visit us. Whenever you like, you will always be welcome!*

*I am afraid there isn't a Tunnel of L---!! In our fairground, but do you like the Cyclone (a Big dipper). ....*

*Is your job in Windermere, in a cake shop. I thought I heard it was. Do you make cakes. It must be marvellous to watch you, if you do!! ...*

*Have you heard the record "Angela Jones", I bought it at half-term, and I think it is heavenly.*

*Longing to see you. You will have to watch your step, there is a nice farm worker here!*

*All my love, Gilly xxxxxxx*

\*

Clearly things were still serious by the middle of the summer, as the following account I wrote on 1st August indicates.

This is to be read by me - and me alone - so if your name is not Alan Macfarlane please don't read this.

I expect you will be reading this in the distant future - if so I wonder if you remember the name Gill L.? You will after you have read this - 'cos most of it - or as far as I know now (Aug 1st) the beginning will be mostly to do with her.

After perhaps the longest nine weeks of my life - first working in Norway and then in Watson's Cafe, the time at last arrived when I would see Gill again. Martin and I decided to go down to Formby where the Ls were having a garden fete in their grounds. After considerable meanderings through Formby and Southport by way of a very pleasant Chinese restaurant, I found myself standing outside the entrance of the "trees" feeling very scared. I had just decided to go in when I saw Gill standing inside the gate. Having waited for her to go for a bit, I decided I would have to go in. I had been wondering what would be the right meeting. But when it came to the point I leapt rather awkwardly over several flower beds and kissed her. She was obviously embarrassed and turned her head at the last moment.

Then began a most frustrating afternoon. At first it was alright as we went in to the garage where there was a film show of the German passion play (I can never remember its name). Gill was meant to be Usher but anyhow we sat together behind tubby (Mrs L) and after a few minutes I plucked up enough courage to even hold her hand! But there was a large and loquacious lady behind us, so I kept having to discuss the film! But after that we just wandered around with a friend of Gill's (Elizabeth) keeping close by and I almost contemplated going home when at last the girls went away at 6.0 o'clock.

Then with Jacky we sat and listened to gramophone records in the sitting room. Gill sat on the edge of the chair and we reminisced. She didn't seem to be at [all] put out when even the vicar came in! Although she refused to kiss me 'till she came back from London. At about 7.0 I went with Jo [Gill's sister] and Gill and looked around the new (and old) houses across the road where they were building on their grandfather's land. Having wandered around happily for a time we came back and looked at the 'family photographs' and then had supper and watched T.V. for a while. Although I often caught Gill's eye we sat (or rather she lay) at different sides of the room. And under Cassie's [Gill's mother] eagle eye I didn't even kiss her goodbye - but I was relieved to see her standing waving as I went off!





The little boat which I bought, ( and Gill's younger sister Jo,) during that summer

The last document I now have is a Christmas card, presumably Christmas 1960 addressed to Alan and Fiona, with Christmas Greetings from Jane, Gill and Jo, from Formby. It would appear that the relationship had cooled to the extent that in a letter to my mother written on 30th December 1960, I wrote:

*Tomorrow I have a group of friends coming up from Manchester to camp in a hostel in the Langdale valley and they have asked me over – unfortunately it is also the one day the Ls will be up. (Unfortunately in that I might have to meet Gill!)*

# Searching for God and Jesus

The Lakeland years are the first half of the period when I most ardently strove to find Jesus. Throughout my childhood, I was brought up in a conventionally Christian family. As children and right through to the end of the Sedbergh years, my sisters and I went to church most Sundays, and always at Christmas and Easter. We would go with some other member of the family, my grandparents, mother or my uncle Richard. When at home in the Lakes, we would often walk across the fields to Hawkshead Church, a walk of about four miles there and back.

I don't remember much of the formal side of religion apart from the cool white church in summer and the pleasure of carols at Christmas. Nor do I remember being very interested in formal religious services at Sedbergh. The one exception to my spiritual apathy was during the times I went for religious retreats, as discussed below. Yet I was interested in things of the spirit, and much of the rest of this material on my education cannot be understood without some account of these wider feelings.

\*

Several things made me interested in religion at Sedbergh and later as an undergraduate and postgraduate at Oxford. One was the influence of my family. Perhaps the most obvious factors here was that of my uncle Richard, a devout evangelical Christian and for many years an 'officer' at the Varsities and Public Schools (V.P.S.) camps which I shall describe below.

His missionary work on me was muted, I suspect, by the suspicion of my grandparents and parents. But they were happy (and relieved, since our holidays were always a slight problem) that he took me off, or arranged for me to go to the Christian camp at Iwerne three times while I was at Sedbergh. I needed to be sent somewhere in the holidays to take the pressure off my grandparents and these boys camps were a good solution.

At the V.P.S. Camp at Iwerne the religious instruction seeped into me. As described in a little more detail below, the catchy hymns, the shining faith and kindness of the Oxbridge 'Officers', the spirit of enthusiastic good will, the muscular Christianity of it all (David Sheppard the cricketer and later Bishop of Liverpool, who was also associated with the Dragon, was a shining example) I found attractive. I learnt the techniques of prayer and bible reading and I have a number of notes and workings on religious practice which I shall discuss below.

Another influence was that of my mother. She was always a seeker after some ultimate solution, some truth in Buddhism, Christianity, philosophy or poetry, which would answer the deeper questions. She meditated and went on pilgrimages and in our later conversations we discussed these things. Like me she felt the closest to spiritual power in poetry and nature.

\*

The second major influence was geographical or environmental, not just the physical but also the social, mental and moral environment, related to the move from the south of England, Dorset and Oxford, to the mountainous north west of the Lake District and Sedbergh.

The Dragon was set in the lush landscape and cloistered affluence of Oxford. Although it was horse-hair shirt days of post-war austerity, there was a feeling that this was only temporary, an enforced aberration, something to be overcome before we all returned to the gentlemanly understated affluence of upper middle class life.

The atmosphere of Sedbergh was very different. The place was a compound of Wordsworth, George Fox and the Quakers, Charlotte Bronte and Wuthering Heights,

Benjamin Franklin, Henry Hart (re-founder of Sedbergh School), Gerard Manley Hopkins and people like the old Luptonian, the soldier and adventurer Spencer Chapman.

The cause for this puritan feeling was, of course, partly physical – the winds, the mountains, the rushing rivers enforced a certain sense of austerity and battle, a bracing encounter with elemental forces. It is no accident that the Quakers and Wordsworth are products of this world. Yet it was also a historical chance.

Northern Lancashire and Yorkshire Life in the Lakes and at Sedbergh is related to a wider powerful streak in English character – the Methodist, Quaker, nonconformist tendency. This leads directly into my own character, my obsession with saving, planning, time-accounting, organization, hard work, seriousness, honesty and a certain philistinism.

The plain, rustic, Wordsworthian and Quaker feel of Sedbergh with its evangelical tendency and pantheism was re-enforced by a continuation of this into the university evangelical movements of OICCU and CICCU (Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union and its equivalent in Cambridge). They in turn were linked up to the Christian Boy's Camps at Iwerne Minster to which I went several from Sedbergh. These camps inculcated the same values – watchfulness over our souls, eschewing the Devil and his temptation (no easy thing – especially with sex!), integrity and honesty, muscular Christianity in short. Even the people who came to speak to us and the school's links to various missions emphasized the evangelical nature of the school.

Simplicity, homeliness, integrity, plain speaking, easy friendship, hard work, hard play, all these were the virtues – and they were, of course, good virtues for the future explorers and rulers of the British Empire, the Spencer Chapman's, Philip Mason's and Bruce Lockhart's of this world.

I did not really question any of this, but I think that while accepting much of the evangelical position, various things moderated the effect. One was Wordsworth (and other poets), too much a pantheist to fit easily into evangelical Christianity. A second was Quakerism, which is in a way a revolt against formal religion. With its tolerance and almost Zen emptiness, it is far from fundamentalism of any kind. A third influence was my mother who at this time was moving from her accepted Anglicanism towards an interest in Assam and India, including its religion, especially Buddhism. The constant reminder that much of the world did not believe in my god and seemed to get on pretty well was a sobering thought.

The glorious and uplifting scenery which inspired Wordsworth and which is expressed above all in 'Intimations of Immortality', affected me. As I walked, climbed, swam and skated in Wordsworth's valley, I think I felt those ecstasies, or at least heightened states of emotion and something of the numinous, the greater forces rolling through the rocks and stones and trees. I saw the strange lights on the mountains, felt the powers and infinities which lifted me out of myself.

So it was here, and in the poetry that I read, that I came closer to some kind of feeling of a power more deeply interfused. Yet it all seemed a long way from the rather dry, practical, rational Christianity that was taught to me at Iwerne and at Sedbergh. If I was seeking allies in the battle against disenchantment, then the kind of puritan Christianity I was being presented with was hardly a help – was indeed part of the problem.

I worshipped nature and the natural world and it is significant that most of my attempts at literary compositions for school magazines were about the world of nature – not about social relations, which seemed to concern the other writers.

\*

What I did find attractive in religion was that at least it attempted to give me answers to the 'why' questions a child asks. Why are we here? Where do we go? Why should we be good? Why is there suffering? I remember having those typical discussions about these subjects with some of my school friends, where we also discussed whether altruism was

possible, whether life after death was believable and such like – often after lights-out in the dormitories. Even if the answers were mildly unsatisfactory, Christianity was a start.

Religion, I sensed, seemed to be a way of creating meaning and holism, stopping the disenchantment. I was not aware that one of the very deepest assaults on magic, faery, another world of spirit, was Protestant Christianity which had sent God a million miles away and savagely attacked all miracles, magic and the interfused world of Catholicism. I somehow felt that at least religion tied things together, it supplied a morality that was relevant to political, economic and social life, it seeped through the strengthening borders that increasingly split my life into parts.

Towards my sixteenth birthday I was confirmed into the Church of England. I describe this event in one of my notebooks as follows:

### Confirmation.

I was confirmed on Dec 1st among about 96 other people by the bishop of Bradford. It was a very moving service indeed. Mummy, Gr & Gr & Aunt Pat came up and gave me some V.G presents.

I felt a real sense of excitement that I might now be entering a true and believable haven. Yet all the time, as I gathered my strength for this new path, I found myself assailed with temptations which I found myself unable to overcome. The most powerful were sins of the flesh, particularly lust, but there were also doubts, doubts as to whether I was really saved, doubts as to how a loving God could allow or even encourage such cruelty and suffering in the world. My reading of history showed no benign providence at work. So I agonized with G.M. Hopkins over the odd behaviour of God in his supposed mercy and omnipotence.

I suspect that my tour in Wordsworth's footsteps were part of the attempt to touch the numinous. Yet I vaguely remember that although I enjoyed it very much there was a feeling of sadness that in the great moments in the Simplon pass and elsewhere, where I knew Wordsworth was having his ecstatic moments, I felt nothing special, just a flat, this-worldly, beautiful, place. I shall check this, but it looks as if I already felt that the magic had largely fled from my world.

\*

The saying “Knock and it shall be opened unto you” was a favourite among evangelical Christians. They suggested that our hearts were like closed doors and it was up to us whether we would open them for our saviour. We should try to receive Jesus into our lives, to be re-born in him. This was the crux of the religious teaching of my Lakeland years. It was strongly associated with the famous picture by Holman Hunt, ‘The Light of the World’, where Jesus is painted holding a lantern and knocking at an ivy-clad door.

Yet while I yearned to be religious, something held me back. I remember praying that I might open my heart's door, trying to force it open. Yet while I felt I was holding it at least ajar, no-one came in. I felt no glowing otherness. It is a lack of response which I think I detect in my mother's childhood diaries, where she felt the same yearning and absence of the expected guest. The personal feeling of being occupied by the loving Jesus, of feeling an inner strength and certainty, was always missing. In prayers and services I felt on the tip of belief – but always a fraud.

Always there was a strong consciousness of sin, not just the usual petty sins of anger, jealousy, pride and so on, but also the damnable sin of lust. In the contest between my desire for sexual ecstasy and the desire for spiritual ecstasy, the former was far more real and attainable. So I constantly felt I had failed, had a secret shame, and that this was probably why Jesus would not come into my polluted heart. All this is revealed hesitantly in the confession at the end of this chapter.

Perhaps I made the conflict more dramatic than it really was. In hindsight it looks like a Bunyan-like struggle. Yet it was very real and the overcoming and mastery of my body was something which I could never fully achieve.

\*

I have mentioned the influence of the boy's camps to which I went for roughly a week or ten days at a time, twice during my Dragon period, and on three summer holidays from Sedbergh.

A brief indication of the nature of the Varsities and Public Schools boys camps is given in some extracts from a blog on Thursday 20 May 2010 Cranmer's Curate 'In Defence of Iwerne Minster' by Julian Mann. (<http://archive.li/WFmb3>)

Mann wrote

An evangelistic enterprise focussing on pupils at what it considers to be the "top 30" public schools is hardly swinging with the spirit of the age. But the Iwerne Minster work, founded in the 1930s by the Revd E.J.H. Nash to bring the Evangelical Christian message to public schoolboys through holiday camps, is still going.

Mann then quotes from a book by Canon David Winter, reviewing a life of John Stott:

'He (Stott) was converted as a teenager at a camp for public schoolboys by a man in khaki shorts known to them as "Bash", whose mission in life was evangelising the "leaders of the future". It took John Stott a long time to escape from the embrace of that oddly male, oddly elitist, and oddly simplistic world. He did, and that is the true "inside story" of the man.'

Julian Mann writes further :

The talks morning and evening were a wonderfully clear, biblically faithful and winsome presentation of the Christian gospel of salvation. It is not the fault of anyone that they are institutionalised in the English boarding school system from the age of eight. The fact that Iwerne Minster was prepared to bring the gospel to those so spiritually and emotionally disadvantaged is surely something to thank God for, even if it did perceive its intended targets as 'strategic' in producing an evangelistic trickle-down effect nationally. This has manifestly not happened.

\*

I went to these camps three times during my Lakeland years, in my first, third and fourth summer holidays. In my fifth year, after leaving the school, I went to another kind of retreat. So I missed this evangelical experience on only one occasion, the summer of 1957, when my parents were on leave.

The occasions are recorded in my grandfather's diaries and an extract from a letter.

On 18 March 1956 I wrote to my parents: *Mr Coates one of the masters has very kindly agreed to take me down to Iwerne on the 10th and I will be brought back up again by Uncle Richard which will be good fun.*

9 April 1956: Violet takes girls to Kendal and sees Alan off to Manchester

17 Apr: Richard arrives with Alan

Sunday 22 Apr: Richard takes Alan to church at Ambleside

Later on it was up to me whether I went or not, for example my mother writing on 10 February 1959: *If you want to go to camp at Easter will you let Richard know, I don't like to bother Granny at this stage.*

22 August 1958: Alan leaves for Iwerne

3 September 1958: Alan and Richard return

Letter of 16 March 1959: *Next holidays I am going to a V.P.S. camp for a while*

Thurs 9 April 1959: Iwerne for Alan

Thurs 16 Apr: Alan finishes at Iwerne

I do not remember a great deal about these camps. I remember Clayesmore School where they were held with its lovely park and the great tree under which we played and battled in many ingenious games. I remember the teas on the terrace with jam-jar traps for wasps. I remember feeling nervous when one of the 'officers' took me off in his car or a long walk at the end of the camp to discover whether Jesus had come into my heart. I remember wonderful trips down to the nearby sea. There was a great deal of sport, games, expeditions to Corfe Castle and elsewhere and mostly it was extremely happy and I went on attending them into my twenties at Oxford.

The pleasure of the sea-side is captured in the only surviving description of a camp in a letter to my parents, written on 5 Sep 1958.

*As you probably gathered from my last letter (if it was not too crumpled) I enjoyed "Camp" very much indeed, I hope I can go there again next Easter. ... We were at last beginning to have our summer at the end of the camp. Actually the weather of the whole camp was pretty good. But for the last four days it was simply beautiful. I went down to the sea several times, Poole Harbours (to go round the "Marines" there) and down to Studland. When we went down to Studland it was a particularly nice day. We could see the Isle of White with ease - a white gash on the skyline while the "Harry" rocks to our right were very clear cut. We had a glorious view of Poole harbour on the way, and the sea was very blue and inviting, and also warm!! I bought a bit of fishing tackle on the way there but I could not find any bait as the tide was right out. But I tried fishing with a bait of orange-peel and silver paper, in the hope of a stray sand-eel or lost lamprey, but to no avail. Just as we were leaving however I saw a lot of lug worms coming up - yes actually throwing up their casts - and I tracked one and caught it when it was doing this. But really it was a most enjoyable day.*

It is perhaps significant that I do not mention the religious side, though that perhaps came in the letter I referred to. I do remember that each morning and evening we would gather in a large library, with windows on each side looking out on the park. There we would sing short bracing songs, whose tunes I still remember. I copied down a number of them into a notebook at the time which give a flavour of what we were being filled with.

Then there were some 'Choruses' (for use for prayers etc), again biblical texts. One or two I remember singing, such as:

Jesus my Saviour, Jesus my Saviour  
Greatest of all friends he is to me.  
When I am lonely, I trust him only.  
Constant Companion I'll prove him to be.

Another was:

Pray, pray without ceasing,  
Ask what you will in His name;  
Trusting, in perfect assurance,  
His fateful promises claim.  
Pray, pray without ceasing:  
If in your heart you believe,  
Faith shall at length be rewarded  
You shall the answer receive.

Another:

There's a fight to be fought, and a race to be run,  
There are dangers to meet by the way;  
But the Lord is my light, and the Lord is my life  
And the Lord is my strength and stay.  
On his word I depend'  
He's my Saviour and Friend,  
And he tells me to trust and obey.  
For the Lord is my light, and the Lord is my life  
And the Lord is my strength and stay.

\*

We also copied out talks and biblical readings and passages to be learnt by heart. We were also being trained to evangelize ourselves, starting with children. Here are a few extracts from a small green notebook inscribed 'A.Macfarlane, Lupton House, Sedbergh School, YORKS' which I suspect dates from the camp in 1958 when I was aged sixteen and a half.

It starts:

#### BIBLE READING

#### "PRAYER"

- i) St Luke 11:1 "Teach us to pray" – and so on. It suggests that I start the day and end the day in prayer and before a big decision or in personal stress and anxiety. I should pray alone and with others, for my Enemies and my friends.
- ii) There is then an "Outline of Ezekiel' for several pages.

There are notes on a talk on 'Consecration' by J. Edison, at Eastbourne on a Friday a talk on 'Christian's relationship to the world'

There is a section outlining a talk on presenting the good news to children, with an obvious parallel to Bunyan.

Society Standards through the world  
 & the Scripture & the Holy Spirit - lowered  
 Values: the love of money is the root of  
 all evil. 1 Tim 6:10 "lovers of pleasure"  
 customs "love of position"  
 - borderless areas -  
 principles when judging  
 1 Cor 8:12 - not the lawfulness  
 but the expediency.  
 i) 1 Cor 10; 23 "edify not"  
 - help or harm our spiritual progress  
 ii) 1 Cor 8; 9 - if it's going  
 to hurt others (Christians)  
 iii) 1 Cor 10; 31 - is it  
 pleasing & honouring to the  
 Lord.

PRESENTING THE GOOD NEWS TO CHILDREN - A PICTURE TALK  
 Heaven.

Salvation had

i) The coming of Sinland - the  
fall of Adam - forbidden  
 + trust.  
 ii) Hence we are born in sin.  
 in Sinland - we enter the world.  
 iii) What makes us sinners? -  
 - because we are born in it - from  
 our heart.  
 iv) We slide down to "sorrow"  
 land & then "slave" land.  
 - education will not save us.  
 (viz the two wars)  
 v) Supposing we were to die? - we  
 go to hell.

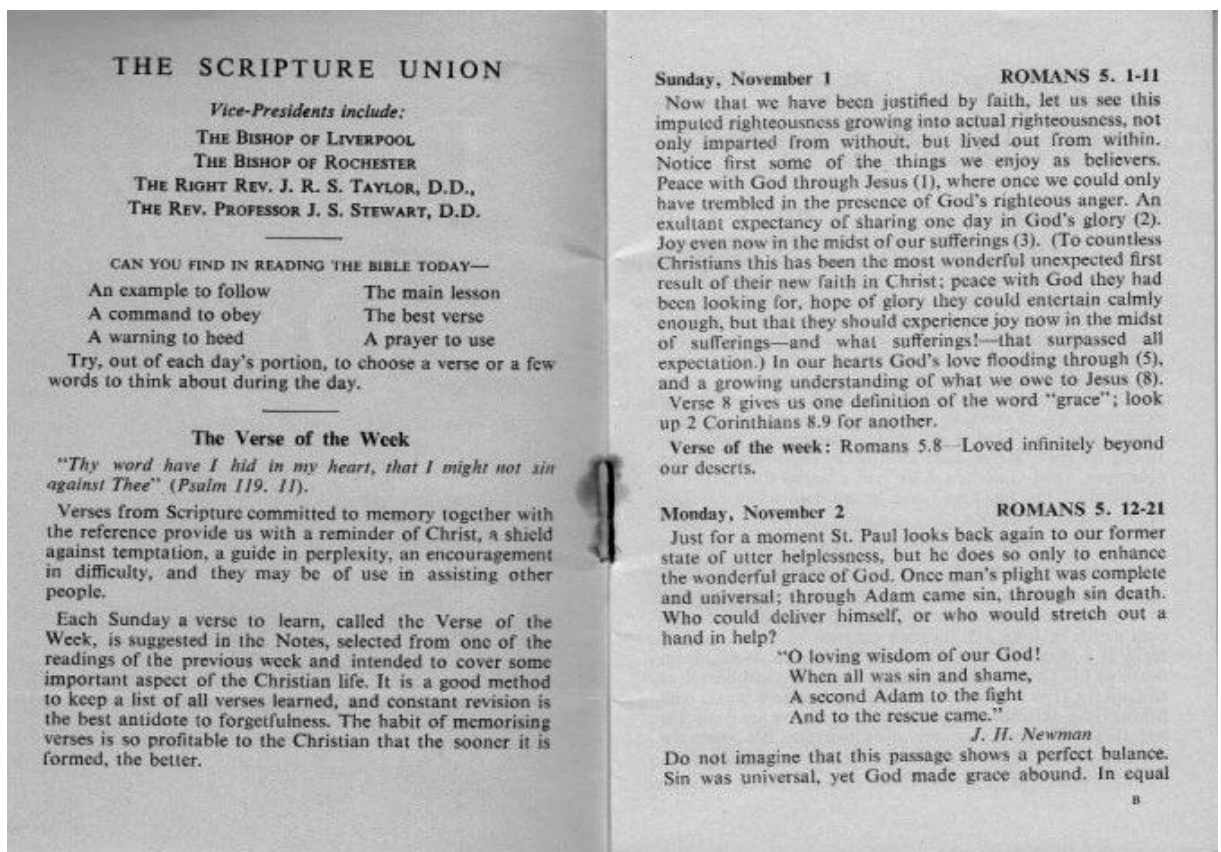
The Good News.  
 - people try to build bridges across  
 i) Good deeds (doesn't get across)  
 ii) try best to be a good person.  
 iii) Be very religious. (pray, etc) worship.  
 - WE CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES.  
 BUT - God build that bridge - JESUS.  
 - bridges are very expensive - this cost  
 an awful lot (Garden of Gethsemane)  
 - dentists pain. - Crucifixion.  
 Comments - simple language  
 - slowness.  
 - picturesque descriptions.  
 "It is finished" - spans the bridge.  
 - service - a long tough road.  
 - don't go to Jesus empty-handed.

There is then a talk by Clive Boddington on 'Priorities at the universities'. There are then a number of biblical texts copied out. - about thirty I was presumably to learn.

At the end of the book is a short piece on 'Talking & Public Speaking'.

It may also have been at these camps that I became a member, or was given a copy, of the Scripture Union booklet on bible reading.





\*

I did not go to Iwerne in 1960, but I did decide to go to a religious retreat, lasting for three days, a practice I continued several times as an undergraduate. This was held at a retreat near York, and I went there on my motorbike.

There is an orange notebook headed 'Wydale Hall Retreat Aug – Sept 1960'.

On the Tuesday there was a talk on "Theme of Retreat". I took notes on this, for example noting that:

'The world is trying to live without God – chasing up blind alleys i) social conditions etc. Port Talbot "Boom town nos 1" "Heaven upon earth" – highest wages etc but happiness? No!

ii) Education – beautiful medicines produced – but rust with spiritual emptiness

iv) Iii) Science – but Why am I here – what am I doing etc?

EVERYTHING IS BREAKING UP. Mental hospitals a quarter all absence from work Neurotic. 1 in 5 children 12 – 18 psychiatric treatment.

"Journey through the Fog" Gollancz Press – London Youth Club – don't even want to play football. Life without purpose & power. ....and much more to that effect.

Later, section four is headed:

What happens when I die?

i) Heaven and Hell is beyond our experience therefore we must use picture language – images not always useful .... The true purpose of life is DEATH. This is the long term policy. We will see all things clearly.

And so on...

There is information on confession, thanksgiving, supplication and useful adages like "Holiness is not taught but caught". We are advised to combine catholic, evangelical and

liberal views of life. There are several pages of useful references on 'Where to find help when... Afraid, Anxious, Backsliding, Friends Fail etc.

There are reports on the current state of religion in the country and abroad and a quotation from Einstein: "Universities, Newspapers, Philosophers and Writers soon snuffed out – only the Churches stood out for truth – it alone had the courage, persistence, power."

There are a number of further pages on prayer, confession and other matters, but perhaps most interesting is a table

CONFESSIO

<u>Home</u>	<u>Friends</u>	<u>Personal</u>	<u>God</u>
<p>1. <u>Up to the time I went to school</u></p> <p>Thoughtless - did not give of my time or effort to others.</p> <p>Bad-tempered &amp; selfish - ill-treated my younger sister.</p> <p>Thought only of myself ungrateful.</p>	<p>Was often unkind</p> <p>- saw them merely as a means to further my own good.</p>	<p>Selfishness</p> <p>Self-seeking</p>	<p>- an almost total lack of contact.</p> <p>Reluctance to give ourselves</p>
<p>2. <u>School</u></p> <p>A desire for position &amp; prestige so I could congratulate myself</p> <p>Bad temper at times</p> <p>Jealousy. Unkindness</p>	<p>lust &amp; unmitigated adultery in my heart. Idolatry - loving my prestige &amp; position more than God. - worshipping the time of me - not God.</p>	<p>lack of humility</p> <p>Self-satisfaction with myself.</p> <p>Pride which could not stand rebuke.</p> <p>A desire to be "lived" for my own sake</p>	<p>frequent failures to make contact.</p> <p>lack of humility</p> <p>No real faith or trust or even working belief.</p>
<p>3. <u>The next 6 months</u></p> <p>Lack of kindness &amp; helpfulness.</p> <p>Moping and moaning around.</p>	<p>Falling in love in a selfish way - thereby forgetting God and harming the girl.</p>	<p>A desire to excel in the field of flirtations - thus merely showing off</p>	<p>Complete lack of faith - belief that Christianity only a moral code - with no mystical power.</p> <p>lack of humility</p>
<p>Add to this covardice in stating my beliefs - judging others &amp; considering myself superior to them - and hypocrisy and Take into account all other sins which I cannot or will not see.</p>			

I shall not comment except to say that I am pleased to note that my sin of ill-treating my younger sister Anne seems to have been confined to my very early years. I am sorry to note however that I was 'moping and moaning around' in the six months since I had left Sedbergh and was 'falling in love in a selfish way – thereby forgetting God and harming the girl', and a desire to 'excel in the field of flirtations'. That I noted that I had a 'complete lack of faith – belief that Christianity only a moral code – with no mystical power' is an accurate reflection, as I now see it.

## Afterwards

In the autumn of 1960 I went up to read History at Worcester College, Oxford. For the next five years I would continue to come back to the Lakes for most of my holidays, though my emotional and intellectual focus was now more on Oxford. The following six years are described in books I hope to publish on myself as *Oxford Undergraduate* and *Oxford Postgraduate*.

My parents retired from India in 1965 and my grandparents moved to a house in the south of England. In autumn 1966 I went to do a Master's Degree at the London School of Economics and started to live with my first wife. Henceforth we had our own home, separate from the Lake District one which had sheltered me for ten years.

My parents continued to live at Field Head until 1968, when they moved to a croft in the Outer Hebrides. When I was on anthropological fieldwork in Nepal in 1969 I heard that they had sold Field Head and with the proceeds bought a small cottage in Dent, a village near my former school, Sedbergh. So the links with the north west continued for a few years, and also through many visits to Dent dale until the end of the millenium to see my parents in law.

In 1971 I was elected a Senior Research Fellow at King's College, Cambridge, where I have been a member since. I did not at the time know of the strong connection between that College and my northern experiences, but later discovered that the founder of Sedbergh School, was Roger Lupton, a Fellow of King's. So the links weave back and forth.

Living in the flat plains of East Anglia, I miss the mountains of my youth, but for many years went almost every year with my second wife to the even more majestic mountains of the Annapurna range in central Nepal. Now I work in western China amongst the eastern Himalayas. So mountains have continued through my life, from the gentle Lakeland days in Esthwaite Dale and the sterner mountains of Sedbergh up to the present.

## **Sedbergh and the Lakes: Timeline**

### **1955**

Monday 19th September - Alan to Sedbergh

Wednesday 26th October – Iris and Mac hand over Beck House to Agents

Tuesday 1st November – Mac and Iris left for India yesterday (31st October)

Tuesday 20th December – Alan’s birthday (14) and arrives on holidays

### **1956**

Tuesday 17th Jan – Alan to Sedbergh

Tuesday 27th March Alan home on holidays

Monday 9th April – Alan off to Manchester [probably to meet Mr. Coates and go to Iwerne VPS camp on 10th April]

Tuesday 17th April – Richard arrives with Alan [back from Iwerne]

Tuesday 1st May – Alan goes back to school

Tuesday 31st July – Alan arrives

Wed 22nd Aug – Richard and Alan leave for Iwerne

Friday 31st Aug – Violet returns with Richard and Alan from south [VPS camp]

Thursday 20th Sept – Alan goes back to school with Doogan

Thursday 20th Dec – Alan’s birthday, Alan comes home

### **1957**

Thursday 17th Jan – Three children back to school

Wednesday 18th March - Alan arrives

Thursday 28th March – Iris arrives by plane from India & stays night with Robert

Friday 29th March – Iris arrives at Field Head

Saturday 30 March – Iris put on film

Tuesday 30th April – Alan goes back with Doogan

Saturday 15 June – Iris goes to Speech Day at Sedbergh

Monday 8th July – Iris leaves for cottage [at High Wray – Slacke Cottage]

Saturday 13th July to Friday 26th July - 'O' level examinations for Alan

Monday 16th July – Iris and children go to London [to meet Mac, Fiona & Anne]

Friday 19th July – Mac arrives with family and go to Slacke Cottage

Tuesday 30th July – Alan returns from school

Thursday 19th September – Iris and family return from Scotland

Friday 20th Sept – Alan returns to school

Saturday 5th October – Mac and Iris go to Sedbergh to see Alan and rugger

Wednesday 9th October – Mac and Iris leave for London [Mac returning to India]

Saturday 23rd November – Went to Sedbergh with Iris & saw rugger

Saturday 14 December – Violet and Iris go to Sedbergh for Confirmation

Thursday 19th December – Alan comes home

Friday 20th December – Alan's birthday

## **1958**

c. 25 Jan Iris returns to India

Thursday 27th March – Alan arrives back from school

Wednesday 6th Aug – Alan arrives from Scotland

Friday 22nd Aug – Alan leaves for Iwerne (VPS camp)

Wed 3rd Sept – Alan and Richard return

Tues 18th Sept – Alan returns to Sedbergh

Thurs 4th December – Alan to Carlisle about broken nose

Thurs 11th December – Girls and Alan home [early – to India]

Sat 13th December – children board plane for India

## **1959**

Thursday 2th April – Alan returns from Sedbergh

Wed 8th April – Alan takes dog down to London (and on to VPS Camp)

Saturday 18th April – Alan returns (from south)

Thursday 30th April – Alan back to Sedbergh

Tuesday 28th July – Alan returns home

Thursday 6th August – Alan and Fiona go South [start of continental tour]

Thursday 3rd September – Alan returns

Friday 18th Sept – Alan goes back to school with Geoffrey Bromley

Tuesday 8th December – Alan at Oxford [trying for Trevelyan Scholarship]

Monday 14th December – Iris arrives

Thursday 17th December – Alan arrives

## **1960**

Wednesday 6th Jan – Dance at High Grassings

Friday 15th Jan – Alan back to school

Monday 28th March – Grandpa heard that Alan had got into Worcester

Tuesday 29th March – Alan returns from Sedbergh

Wed 6th April – Mac returns

Wed 15th September – Iris, Fiona and Anne leave for India

October – Alan to Oxford University (Worcester College), Mac returns to Assam